

GRAND LONG STORIES OF ST. JIM'S AND GREYFRIARS INSIDE

The GEM 2^d



LOWTHER'S S-TAR TURN!

2
IT PROMISED TO BE THE LAUGH OF THE TERM—BUT IT ALMOST BECAME THE
BIGGEST FLOP ON RECORD!

LOWTHER *Brings the House Down!*



By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

Monty Lowther had forgotten Marie's grave looks. Dressed as the fat Colonel Potsdam, he was taking the audience by storm. Never had a junior play been received with such enthusiasm.

CHAPTER 1.

A Little Absent-minded!

"H A, ha, ha!"
Thus Monty Lowther of the Shell Form at St. Jim's.

There was a gasp from the other Shell fellows, and Mr. Linton, the Form-master, jumped. For the Shell were in their Form-room at second lesson, and the whole class were silent and more or less attentive while Mr. Linton was expounding to them the hidden mysteries of deponent verbs—those troublesome verbs which are passive in form and active in meaning.

Some of the Shell fellows felt inclined to yawn, and more felt inclined to doze. But they did not venture to do either under the sharp eyes of their Form-master. They did not feel inclined to laugh. There was nothing humorous in deponent verbs. Deponent verbs were serious affairs—very serious indeed.

But even if the Shell fellows had felt inclined to laugh, Mr. Linton's severe brow would have checked their risibility. The Form-room was not a place for merriment.

That sudden burst of laughter from Monty Lowther, therefore, dropped like a bombshell into the silence of the Form-room.

The Shell fellows stared at Lowther. Mr. Linton spun towards him, fixing his eyes upon the absent-minded junior with a basilisk glare.

Lowther turned crimson. There was
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a hush—a dreadful hush—like the calm that precedes a tropical storm. Then Mr. Linton spoke.

"Lowther!"

"Yes, sir!" gasped Lowther.

"Oh, my hat!" murmured Tom Merry, who sat beside Lowther. "You've done it now, you ass! What the dickens—"

"What the deuce—" murmured Manners.

"Lowther, kindly stand up!"

Monty Lowther stood up. All eyes in the Form were fixed upon him, and his face looked like a freshly boiled beetroot. The unfortunate junior was fully conscious of the enormity of his offence. In the midst of the sacred stillness of the Form-room he had laughed—suddenly and loudly—interrupting the Form-master by that ill-timed burst of merriment.

"I think you laughed, Lowther?" said Mr. Linton.

"D-did I, sir?"

"You did!"

"I—I—I'm sorry, sir!" stammered Lowther.

"You have interrupted the lesson. Lowther, by this exhibition of ill-timed and unseemly merriment!" said Mr. Linton in a grinding voice. "May I venture to ask you to explain yourself?" Mr. Linton could be heavily sarcastic at times. "Will you have the extreme goodness to point out to me the comic element in the Latin grammar which has hitherto escaped my notice?"

Lowther did not reply. He wished fervently at that moment that the Form-room floor would open and swallow him up. But the solid planks of the floor showed no sign of obliging him in that way.

"I am waiting for your reply, Lowther! I should be glad to know in what respect a deponent verb appears to you in a comic light?"

"I—I—I—" stammered Lowther.

"Perhaps you were not thinking of the lesson at all, Lowther?"

"N-no, sir!"

"Indeed! Perhaps you were not thinking at all, and that ebullition of laughter was simply the sign of a vacant mind?" suggested the Form-master.

"Yes, sir—I—I mean, no, sir!"

"You were thinking of some extraneous matter, then?"

"Ye-es, sir!"

"And what was this important matter which occupied all your attention, to the exclusion of such smaller trifles as your lessons?" demanded Mr. Linton, still in the heavily sarcastic vein.

"I—I—it—I—I was thinking, sir—ahem!"

"Well?"

"Of—of—of our—our play, sir."

"Of what?"

"Our p-play, sir!" gasped Lowther.

"W-we are doing a play at the end of the term, sir, before breaking-up, and—I was thinking, sir—ahem!"

"And you judge that the Form-room

THE YARN OF THE YEAR—STARRING MONTY LOWTHER AND THE CHUMS OF ST. JIM'S.

during lessons is a suitable place to think of the play you are arranging for the end of the term?"

"N-no, sir!"

"Then why," demanded Mr. Linton, dropping the sarcastic vein, and speaking in a voice like the rumble of distant thunder—"why, Lowther, do you withdraw your attention from your lessons and concentrate it upon some absurd play-acting nonsense, and disturb the attention of your more dutiful Form-fellows by a sudden ebullition resembling that of a—ahyena, Lowther?"

"I—I—I—I—It flashed into my mind all of a sudden, sir, and—and I got the idea all of a sudden, sir! That's how it was, sir. I forgot where I was!"

"Certainly you appear to have forgotten yourself entirely, Lowther. I quite agree with you in that. I am sorry, Lowther, that such trifling matters as lessons should interfere with your valuable thoughts on the subject of plays and play-acting! But I fear that I must impress upon your mind the fact that the Form-room is the place for work, and not for idle thoughts and disrespectful laughter. Come here, Lowther!"

Mr. Linton took a cane from his desk. Monty Lowther advanced reluctantly before the Form.

"Hold out your hand!"

Swish!

"Ow!"

"Now the other!"

Swish!

"Grooooooh!"

"After lessons, Lowther, you will write out the sentence, 'I must not be idle and ridiculous,' a hundred times!"

"Ye-es, sir!"

"Now go back to your place!"

Monty Lowther groaned, and went back to his place. His hands were tingling and aching. Mr. Linton had laid on those cuts with terrific vim. The unfortunate junior was not likely to laugh again that morning.

Mr. Linton laid down his cane, and the lesson was resumed. And for the rest of the morning Mr. Linton devoted special attention to Monty Lowther. He did not mean to give the junior a chance of allowing his thoughts to wander again. He dragged Lowther up and down through the Latin grammar, so to speak, till the unhappy victim's brain was dancing with all kinds of verbs and substantives and pronouns. Monty Lowther was really on the point of exhaustion when the hour of dismissal came at last and he escaped.

CHAPTER 2.

A Stroke of Genius!

"YOU frabjous ass!"

"You howling duffer!"

Such were the sympathetic remarks of Tom Merry and Manners addressed to their suffering chum when they came out of the Form-room.

Monty Lowther groaned. His hands were still aching and his head was in a buzz. His feelings towards Mr. Linton were not amiable.

"What on earth did you cackle like that for?" demanded Tom Merry. "You might have known Linton would come down on you like a sack of coke!"

"Ass!" growled Lowther. "I tell you I was thinking, and I forgot I was in the rotten Form-room, doing rotten Latin, with a rotter! But I don't care—I've got the idea!"

"What idea?"

"For our comedy."

Tom Merry and Manners did not look unduly impressed. As a matter of fact, they were full of ideas themselves for that play.

The term was near its end at St. Jim's, and the Junior Dramatic Society in the School House intended to give a performance as a wind-up to the term—something out of the common—which was to beat all previous records.

Parents and relations would be visiting St. Jim's in great numbers on that great day, and the Co. meant to give something worthy of such an audience.

The Terrible Three were the prime movers in the enterprise, though Blake & Co. of Study No. 6 and Figgins & Co. of the New House were very keen indeed about it.

But the Terrible Three were not quite in agreement on the subject. Whether the great performance was to be a tragedy or a comedy was not yet settled, and there was considerable argument on the subject.

"It flashed into my mind," said Lowther, speaking eagerly and forgetting the ache in his palms for a moment. Monty Lowther was devoted to amateur theatricals. "You see, our play is to be a comedy."

"Tragedy!" said Manners.

"I was thinking of a variety show," Tom Merry remarked.

"Of course, it's to be a comedy!" snapped Lowther. "People don't want to be made to cry on a holiday occasion. And they don't want a series of ancient gags and chestnuts, Tom Merry. Of course, it must be a comedy, and, of

With the success of the Lower School play resting on his shoulders it isn't like Monty Lowther to let his chums down—and yet, what else can he do?

course, we must have a good comic part in it. I've already selected the comedy."

"Like your cheek!"

"It's called 'Catching the Colonel,' " pursued Lowther unheedingly, "and, with some improvements by ourselves, it will be ripping. The part of the comic colonel can be made simply stunning in good hands—ahem! Of course, I take that part!"

"Well, my hat!"

"Only the part, as it stands, is rather weak. I've been thinking hard over it for an idea of improving it—something to make it really go, you know. And, all of a sudden, in the Form-room this morning, it flashed into my mind. It was so funny that I simply couldn't help giving a yelp."

"Well, we'll give it a hearing," said Tom Merry considerably. "If there's anything in it, we'll give you a chance. What's the wheeze?"

"You see, the comic part has got to be strengthened," explained Lowther.

"I've thought of turning the comic colonel into a German, a fat chap, with yellow whiskers, and a bald head, and broken English, complete. That would be funny enough to start with. But, of course, I want a model to study, to work up the part. And then it flashed into my mind—old Schneider."

"What?"

Herr Schneider was the German master at St. Jim's. Monty Lowther had often declared that a true artist could

not afford to be a respecter of persons. But that he should think of taking one of the masters at St. Jim's for a model for a comic part took his chums' breath away.

"Old Schneider, of course," said Lowther eagerly. "He was simply built for a comedy. The way he speaks English would make an owl laugh. Then his way of poking his head forward and blinking at you over his glasses and rubbing his fat chin with his fat forefinger—why, that's worth a fortune to a comedian. And his socks, too! A fat man, in pretty silk socks—think of that! And the way he wears his trousers high to show his socks. My dear chap, he's a perfect gold-mine! I wonder it's never struck me before. Of course, I don't mean to make-up to impersonate him, or anything of that sort. That wouldn't be allowed. What I mean is, to study his language and his mannerisms, and reproduce them in the part of the comic colonel. See?"

"You—you utter ass!" said Tom Merry. "And what will Schneider say when he sees you doing it?"

"He won't be here himself. Haven't you heard that his niece is coming from Germany—Fraulein something or other—to fetch him away two or three days before breaking-up? Though I don't suppose he would recognise his manners and customs on the stage played by me. He's worth a fortune as a model."

"But—"

"I'm going to take up German enthusiastically and talk to him like a Dutch uncle," said Lowther. "In a week I'll be able to reproduce all his ways—all his manners—all his customs. And when I bring them out in our comedy, it will set the House in a roar!"

"You seem to have settled that it's going to be a comedy!" grunted Manners.

"Must be!" said Lowther decidedly. "Look here, you fellows know that I know more about the stage than you do. Didn't I nearly get sacked once for running away and joining a travelling company? Haven't I got friends in the theatrical profession? Can't I act your heads off?"

"In the comic line, perhaps," said Manners. "But my Hamlet—"

"Blow your Hamlet! Fellows are fed-up on Hamlet. Besides, we can't play Hamlet. Every fellow would want to be Hamlet, and we should never agree about it."

"Something in that," said Tom Merry, laughing. "But this scheme of imitating old Schneider is a little too thick. If Schneider didn't recognise it, the other masters would."

"They couldn't say anything. A comedian has a right to wear his trousers high, and wear gaudy silk socks if he likes. He can talk in broken English if he wants to. Of course, old Schneider's name won't be used. The comic colonel's name will be something in German—Colonel Sauerkraut, or Colonel Kase, or some name like that. And as Schneider won't be here, there won't be anybody's feelings to be hurt. I tell you this idea is the catch of the season. Now that's settled, I ask you chaps, as a personal favour, to back me up, and I'll answer for the results."

"Well, if you put it like that," said Manners, relenting.

"I do. I tell you it's a topper—a regular topper! I'm going to make a regular study of Schneider."

"Don't let him catch you doing it," grinned Tom Merry.

"Trust me for that! Now is it a go?"

"Well, yes. You mean to have your way, anyhow, and we've argued about it long enough," said Tom Merry.

"Good egg!"

"Dry up! Here comes Schneider!" said Manners.

The Fourth Form, who had been doing German, had just been dismissed. Herr Schneider came out of the Form-room passage.

He was a fat gentleman, with a round, fat face, generally good-humoured in expression. In class he was a tartar, having a most uncomfortable sense of duty which made him insist upon driving the most terrible, irregular verbs into the thickest heads, calling in the aid of a "pointer" when necessary. Herr Schneider was not popular; but he was not really a bad sort.

The prospect of breaking-up for the vacation, and going on a holiday to his beloved Rhineland, made the German master unusually amiable just now, and he nodded kindly to the Terrible Three in the passage, and paused to speak to them.

"I hear tat you shall ein play put on mit yourselves pefore preaking-up," he remarked. "I am sorry tat it is not tat I shall stay to see him."

"We are very sorry you won't be here, sir," said Tom Merry.

"Very sorry, indeed, sir," said Monty Lowther, whose eyes were "taking stock" of the German master already in a professional manner for future use.

"Ja, ja, I shall be sorry," said Herr Schneider. "But meine nichte Marichen—my little niece Marie—she shall come to take me away to Shermanny, and it is not tat I shall be here after. So I shall not see him. But I wish you te greatest of success."

"You are very kind, sir," said Tom Merry. "When does Miss Schneider come?"

The German master smiled. The expression on his fat face showed that he was very fond of his niece, and the juniors liked him the better for it.

"It is not tat meine niece is name Schneider," he explained. "Marichen is te daughter of meine sister. Fraulein Erlen is te name—Marie Erlen. She shall come here dis veek, and de Head haf very kindly say tat he is pleased if my niece she shall stay few days at te school mit me. Das war sehr goot! It will be a great pleasure for me."

And the German master nodded kindly and walked on.

"Never knew he had a niece," said Manners. "I wonder what she's like?"

"Twenty stone, most likely," said Monty Lowther. "If she takes after her uncle, anyway. It's a pretty name, though. And the German diminutive is very pretty—Marichen—little Marie. But never mind her. Did you spot him? I was taking him down all the time. Look here!"

Lowther glanced round to make sure that Herr Schneider had gone, and then went on.

"Mein poys, ich bin ferry sorry tat it is not tat I shall stay mit meinselb and yourself for te see te play mit yourselves and ourselves."

He reproduced Herr Schneider's beautiful accent exactly, poking forward his head, and peering in the same way, and the Shell fellows roared.

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"Bai Jove! What's the little joke, deah boys?" asked Arthur Augustus D'Arcy of the Fourth Form, as he joined them.

"We've settled about the play," explained Lowther.

Arthur Augustus adjusted his eyeglass and regarded Monty Lowther severely.

"Weally, Lowthah—"

"Well, what is it?" demanded Blake of the Fourth. "If it's 'Hamlet' you can put me down as the Prince of Denmark. That's my little bit."

"It isn't 'Hamlet.'"

"Well, if you want to make it 'Othello,' I don't mind. I can make-up as a giddy moor rippingly," said Blake, in a thoughtful way.

"It isn't 'Othello!'" snapped Lowther. "It isn't Shakespeare at all."

"Well, I don't object to a modern play," said Blake, in the most accommodating manner. "Put me in the title-role, and I'm your man!"

"It's a comedy—"

"I should have pweferred a twagedy," said Arthur Augustus, with a shake of the head. "I am wathah a dab at twagic parts."

"Well, if we had a tragedy, you'd turn it into a comedy, so it would come to the same thing," Lowther remarked. "It's a comedy called, 'Catching the Colonel.'"

"And I'm the colonel?" asked Blake.

"No; I'm the colonel!"

"Don't be funny!"

"That's just what I'm going to be—as the colonel," grinned Lowther. "Colonel Potsdam, that's the name, and I'm the man!"

"Look here—"

"No time," said Lowther. "I've got to write out my part!"

And Monty Lowther sauntered away, chuckling gleefully over his great idea.

D'Arcy and Blake looked wrathful.

"Look here, Tom Merry—"

"Yaas, look here, Tom Mewwy—" Tom Merry seemed to be afflicted with sudden deafness. He strolled out of the School House, whistling, followed by Manners.

Blake and D'Arcy looked at one another.

"The awful nerve!" exclaimed Blake indignantly. "Those Shell bounders have too much cheek! The nerve of it!"

"Yaas, wathah!" said D'Arcy, with equal indignation. "I quite agree with you, deah boy. It is weally altogethah too thick."

"Of course, I must play the title role."

"Eh? You mean I must play the title wole, deah boy," said Arthur Augustus, gently but firmly.

"Oh, don't be an ass!" said Blake crossly.

"Then don't you be a fathead!" said D'Arcy warmly. "It stands to weason—"

Weally, Blake, I wish you would not walk away when I am talkin' to you—"

But Jack Blake had walked away, and there was an end of it.

CHAPTER 3.

Very Keen on German!

MONTY LOWTHER believed in striking the iron while it was hot.

That afternoon the Shell had German, and it was regarded, as a rule, in the light of a painful affliction. But to Lowther, at least, that lesson was a joy.

While Herr Schneider was labouring to drive German verbs into English

heads which did not seem at all receptive, Monty Lowther was studying him from an artistic point of view. He noted every little mannerism, he picked up every shade of the master's beautiful accent. At the same time Lowther was a most attentive pupil. To cultivate the German master purely as an artist it was necessary to get into his good graces, and that Lowther set out to do.

Herr Schneider was quite pleased with him that afternoon, and gave him a warm word of commendation at the end of the lesson.

Monty Lowther came out of the Form-room very cheerfully. He felt that he was getting on. In the course of the week he was sure that he would be able to reproduce all Herr Schneider's comic little ways without a fault; and the character, when he had completed it, would be a "regular scream."

But if Herr Schneider was a thing of beauty and a joy for ever just now to Monty Lowther of the Shell, he did not appear in the same light to the other fellows, who had no artistic designs upon him.

Levison and Mellish of the Fourth were muttering together in the passage as Lowther came along, and the Shell fellow caught Herr Schneider's name. He stopped at once. He knew Levison's little ways, and he guessed that some "jape" on the German master was under discussion.

"What are you two rotters up to?" Lowther inquired politely.

"Find out!" replied Levison, with equal politeness.

"It's that beast Schneider," said Mellish. "He's given us an imput each, because he says we slack at German. Blessed if I can learn that barbarous lingo. And I don't want to, either."

"Ass!" said Lowther. "German is a poetical language, and Herr Schneider is a jolly good sort!"

The Fourth Formers stared at him.

"First time I've heard you say so," said Levison. "What are you sucking up to Schneider for, I'd like to know?"

"He's a beast!" said Mellish viciously. "And he's jolly well going to get it in the neck this time."

"Shurrup!" said Levison.

"Well, Lowther won't sneak, I suppose?"

"Keep it dark, ass, all the same!"

"I won't sneak," said Monty Lowther. "But you're not going to play any tricks on old Schneider. He's a good sort, and I won't have it. If you play any rotten game on him, I'll hammer you. So remember that!"

And Lowther walked away.

"Got a bee in his bonnet, I should think," said Mellish in surprise. "Why, he's been caned and gated himself for tricks on old Schneider!"

"Oh, he can go and eat coke!" growled Levison. "We're jolly well going to make Schneider sit up! I've got a straw basket that will do beautifully. I'll line it with paper to keep in the tar."

"He, he, he!" chuckled Mellish.

"We can easily get the tar; there's plenty in Taggles' tar-pot in the tool-shed. And when it comes down on Schneider's napper, perhaps he'll be sorry that he's handed out impositions so liberally—what?"

"He, he, he!"

And the two young rascals went off to make their preparations for laying a "booby-trap" for the unfortunate expounder of German verbs.

Tom Merry and Manners were looking for their chum. They found him talking to Herr Schneider in the passage near Mr. Lathom's study. Lowther had a volume of Goethe in his

hand, and he had stopped the German master to ask him to explain a passage in it.

Herr Schneider was very keen on the poets of his native land, and a junior who took an interest in them outside lesson-time was sure of his good graces.

Tom Merry and Manners looked on with interest. They knew their chum's real object, which the master had no suspicion of.

"I am ferry pleased mit you, Lowther!" said Herr Schneider, beaming over his spectacles. "Then it shall be tat you can read te Deutsch more easily, you shall find great pleasure in pursuing te vorks of te immortal Goethe. I am ferry glad te see you taking up te poem of Faust, vich is a great poem, only a leetle difficult for a beginner. I vill always gif you any assistance."

"You are very kind indeed, sir," said Lowther demurely. "I was thinking of asking you if I might come to your study sometimes, sir, and ask you things."

Herr Schneider beamed like the full moon.

"Certainly, mein poy! Come to my study after tea. I go now to tea mit Herr Lathom, but at six o'clock you may come to my study, and I shall be dere."

"Thank you very much, sir!"

"Not at all. I am ferry pleased! Now, dis passage—I vill explain him. Nur mit Entsetzen wach! Ich Morgens auf—dat shall say, it is only mit misgivings tat I shall wake meinselt up in te morning. Pring tat pook mit you, and ve vill go over him togezzar."

Lowther thanked the German master warmly, and Herr Schneider went into Mr. Lathom's study.

Tom Merry and Manners swooped down on their chum.

"You ass—"

"You fathead—"

"Getting on—what?" grinned Lowther. "When I have him in the study all to myself, I can study him at my leisure. Half an hour a day without interruption—think of that!"

"Blessed if I quite like it," said Tom Merry. "You're pulling his leg!"

"What were German legs made for?"

"I don't half like it, anyway!"

"Rats!" said Lowther.

"Eh?"

"Art for art's sake, to put it in simple language suitable to your understanding," said Lowther compassionately. "Somebody said once that the true artist is bound to be unscrupulous. There was a painter once who used to poison people for the purpose of studying their dying expressions, to be reproduced on canvas. Of course, I don't believe in going so far as that—"

"Really?" asked Tom Merry sarcastically.

"No," said Lowther calmly. "I call that going too far. But an artist must be allowed a certain amount of latitude. And I've got to work up the part."

"Tea's ready!" growled Manners.

"Right-ho! I'm due in Schneider's study at six."

The Terrible Three went up to their study to tea. Monty Lowther, quite taken up with his artistic designs, hardly noticed what he ate. At five minutes to six he jumped up.

"Hold on!" said Tom. "There's a cake to follow."

"Sorry! Keep some for me," said Lowther. "I'm off!"

And he fairly ran out of the study.

"Off!" growled Manners. "I should think he is off—his rocker! And we'll jolly well finish the cake!"

Monty Lowther, careless of the fate of

the cake, hurried downstairs and made his way to Herr Schneider's study. The door was a few inches ajar, and Herr Schneider was not there. Lowther pushed open the door, intending to wait in the study until the German master came in; but he never got into the study.

As he pushed the door open there was a sudden swoosh!

Lowther started back with a gasp, but he backed too late. A round basket that had been perched on top of the door had fallen and fairly bonneted him. Something that was sticky and smelly swamped over his head and face, and Monty Lowther staggered into the passage, unrecognisable, and gasping, and choking, and snorting frantically.

CHAPTER 4.

Very Fortunate Indeed!

"GROOOOOGH! Hooogh! Ugh!"

Lowther dabbed frantically at his face. He pitched off the basket, and it crashed to the floor, but most of its contents remained upon Monty Lowther. His hands came away black from his face.

"Groogh! Ow-ow-tar! Oh! Ugh!"

"What on earth's the matter?" exclaimed Kildare of the Sixth, coming down the passage at a run as he heard those wild, gurgling sounds. "Why—what—who—"

"Gerroff! Gerrooooofff!"

"Great Scott!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Who is it?"

There was a rush of fellows from all quarters to see the extraordinary phenomenon, Monty Lowther gouged liquid tar out of his eyes and nose and mouth, and gasped.

"Grooooff! Groooooogg!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bai Jove! Who is it?" yelled Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "It's somebody playin' a twick. But what a weally wemarkable twick!"

"Groogh! Ow-ow! Ugh! Groooooogg!"

"It's Lowther!" roared Blake. "What have you done that for, Lowther?"

"Lowthah, bai Jove! He's smothahed himself with tah! How vevy cuwious!"

"What did you do it for?" roared Talbot of the Shell. "Where does the joke come in, Lowther? Blessed if I can see it!"

"It's funny!" chuckled Blake. "But I don't see where the fun comes in for Lowther! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Groogh!"

Yells of laughter rang along the passage. Monty Lowther, streaming with thick tar, was certainly funny to the view, though he was not feeling at all amused himself. Kildare leaned against the door and roared. The juniors simply shrieked. And Monty Lowther gasped and gurgled as if for a wager.

"Mein gootness!" ejaculated Herr Schneider, coming along the passage with Mr. Linton, looking very angry, at his heels. "Vat is tat den?"

"Is that Lowther?" gasped the master of the Shell. "Lowther, answer me."

"Groogh!" groaned Lowther. "Yes, sir."

"So this is another of your tricks!" thundered Mr. Linton. "You must learn to keep your peculiar sense of humour in control, Lowther! How dare you smother yourself with tar in this disgusting manner?"

"Groogh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"



"Ha, ha, ha!" The silence of the Form-room was suddenly broken by a peal of laughter. "Lowther!" gasped Mr. Linton, spinning round to face the class. "What is the meaning of this, boy?"

"Silence! Lowther, explain yourself at once! Upon my word, you shall be flogged for this revolting—this disgusting—"

"Groogh! Do you think I did it on purpose?" shrieked Lowther. "Do you think I like having tar swamped over my napper? Groogh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Silence! This is not a laughing matter! Lowther, do you mean to say that this was an accident?"

"Yes—groogh! It was a b-b-booby trap, I suppose," gasped Lowther. "I opened Herr Schneider's door—groogh—and the thing fell on my head! Groogh!"

"Mein gootness!"

"Why were you going into Herr Schneider's study at all?" asked Mr. Linton.

"Grooogh!"

"That is all right, sir," said Herr Schneider. "Lowther asked me to explain to him a passage in Sherman, and I tell him to go to mein study at six o'clock."

"Indeed! Lowther is showing a desire for knowledge that I have never observed in him before," said Mr. Linton, sarcastically. "However, it certainly appears that Lowther is not to blame for once. Indeed, this is a very fortunate occurrence. That booby-trap was evidently intended for you, Herr Schneider, and Lowther has fallen into it by accident. Very fortunate indeed!"

"Groogh!" groaned Lowther. He did not regard it as fortunate in the least.

"Mein gootness! But it was ferry lucky!" said Herr Schneider. "You are quite right, Herr Linton. Lowther, I am sorry for you, but it shall be ferry fortunate for me that you come to mein study mit yourself."

"Groogh!"

"You had better go and get yourself cleaned, Lowther," said Mr. Linton sharply. "You are in a most disgusting state. And I shall make the strictest inquiries for the author of this outrage. Go at once!"

Lowther grunted. He felt that he was a most unfortunate individual, and he

was not at all pleased at having saved Herr Schneider from a booby-trap in this way. He felt that the least Mr. Linton could have done was to show sympathy. But Mr. Linton was angry, and he had no sympathy to waste—indeed, knowing the peculiar, humorous disposition of Monty Lowther, he was probably not quite satisfied that Lowther was wholly innocent in the matter. He waved his hand to him impatiently.

"Please go! You are in a most disgusting state! Oh, ah! Do not brush against me, Lowther! Be careful, you utterly stupid boy!" shrieked Mr. Linton, as Lowther bumped on him in passing and smeared his scholastic gown with tar. "You—you stupid young rascal! Get away!"

"Sorry, sir—"

"Get away—get away!"

Mr. Linton pushed Lowther roughly away, and his hand came off Lowther's shoulder thick with tar. Lowther grinned under the coating of tar on his face and went down the passage, all the fellows backing away and giving him a very wide berth. They did not want to share the spare tar with Mr. Linton.

A shout of laughter followed Lowther up the stairs. The accident seemed more funny to the juniors even than if Herr Schneider himself had been caught in the booby-trap.

"Serve him jolly well right!" said Gore of the Shell. "What is he swotting German for? Serve him right!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"He will want a curry-comb to get all that off, I guess!" chuckled Lumley-Lumley of the Fourth.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Monty Lowther tramped furiously up the stairs. Tom Merry and Manners had heard the disturbance below, and they had come out of their study, leaving the cake unfinished, to see what was the matter. The sight of Lowther streaming with tar almost doubled them up.

"M-my hat!" gasped Manners.

"What the dickens—"

"What the deuce—" stuttered Tom

Merry. "Oh, Lowther, this is too rich! Ha, ha, ha!"

"What are you cackling at?" roared Lowther, with a tarry glare. "I couldn't have helped it if some beast fixed up a booby-trap for Schneider, could I? And do you think I put my head under it on purpose, you silly jays?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"It's giddy justice!" sobbed Tom Merry. "This is your punishment for pulling Schneider's leg! Ha, ha, ha!"

"You silly, cackling chump!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You—you—you—"

Words failed Monty Lowther. He rushed at the two yelling juniors and grasped them in his tarry arms and hugged them as if he loved them. Then Tom Merry and Manners ceased to laugh—all of a sudden. A bear's hug would have been more welcome than Monty Lowther's at that moment. The tar smothered them, and they roared with anger as they struggled to escape.

"Groogh! Leggo! Beast! Villain! Leggo!"

"Yow-ow! Chuck it!"

Tom Merry and Manners tore themselves away. Lowther burst into a yell as he looked at them. It was his turn to laugh now.

"Ha, ha, ha! How do you like it? Isn't it funny? Ha, ha, ha!"

"Grooogh! You sticky beast!"

"Ow! You slimy rotter!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Lowther.

He fled to the bath-room as his chums rushed at him and locked himself in; and Tom Merry and Manners, after breathing dire threats through the key-hole, proceeded to another bath-room, and for the next hour the Terrible Three were very busy and very tarry.

CHAPTER 5.

Lowther's Line!

EVERY cloud, it is said, has a silver lining, and Monty Lowther's misadventure was not wholly unfortunate for him.

Herr Schneider understood that the junior had received the consignment of tar intended for himself, and he was very pleased by his narrow escape, and very kind to Lowther afterwards.

Monty Lowther had saved him from a very unpleasant experience, though quite unintentionally, and it helped Lowther on in his new "wheeze" of getting into the German master's good graces.

Mr. Linton's strict inquiry did not result in revealing the culprit; but both Mellish and Levison were seen with thick ears and swollen noses that evening after an interview with Lowther, so the perpetrators of the booby-trap did not escape punishment.

And Herr Schneider, in the kindness of his heart, kept Lowther for an hour that evening, explaining German poetry to him, and promising him another hour the following afternoon.

Perhaps that final act of kindness was a little too much even for Monty Lowther, anxious as he was to study the German master and memorise his little peculiarities; for the next day was a half-holiday, and Lowther wanted to play cricket. But he thanked Herr Schneider very warmly, and left the German gentleman with an impression that he was a studious lad, with proper appreciation of German poetry.

Tom Merry and Manners waited for him to come out of Herr Schneider's study. They missed him, and were not wholly pleased by his assiduity in cultivating Herr Otto Schneider. Art for

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art's sake was all very well, but there were limits. They were glad to see that he looked tired when they met him in the passage.

"Fed-up?" asked Manners.
"Well, it is rather thick," agreed Lowther. "I've had yards and yards of Goethe, and some Uhland and Korner thrown in, and it's buzzing in my head like a hive of bees. But I'm getting on a treat. I'm getting Schneider down splendidly, and I shall have him grunt-and-snore perfect by the time we give the play."
"Suppose he spots what you're doing?"

"Oh, rot!"
"There's another thing I've thought of," said Tom Merry sharply. "His niece is coming in a day or two. You know how sharp women are. I bet you she'll spot the little game."

"Bosh! She will only think of meal-times and sauerkraut and things," said Lowther. "Bet you she weighs twenty stone and talks only German. Besides, I shall be careful. Don't make difficulties. I tell you this is a stunning wheeze, and we shall simply bring the house down when I do Colonel Potsdam on the stage."

"Lowther!" Mr. Linton looked out of his study doorway as the Shell fellows passed. "Have you done your imposition?"

"Ahem! No, sir."
"And why have you not done it?"
"Ahem! I—I've been doing a lot of German, sir," said Lowther meekly.
Mr. Linton looked at him very suspiciously.

"I hope that this extraordinary application on your part, Lowther, is entirely sincere," he said surely.

"Ahem! I hope so, sir," assented Lowther.

"This sudden outburst of activity, Lowther, astonishing as it is, must not be allowed to interfere with your work. I expect those lines this evening."

"Yes, sir."
The Terrible Three went their way. In their study Lowther glared at Tom Merry and Manners, who were grinning.

"Lot of encouragement a chap gets when he starts swotting at a difficult language!" he growled. "I think it's up to a Form-master to encourage a chap."

"He doesn't believe it's genuine," chuckled Manners. "You see, he knows you too well."

"I call him a suspicious beast!" growled Lowther. "Now, what about arranging the parts for the comedy. We must give parts to a dozen fellows, at least. Study No. 6 will want to come in, or there will be trouble, and Figgins & Co. will have to have bits. It will want some wangling to satisfy everybody."

"Leave it to us while you do your lines."

"Rot! Aren't I stage manager? I've got to see that the parts are suitable, or as suitable as possible. We've got no actors, excepting myself and Kerr of the New House. The rest of the company will be pretty poor stuff."

"Why, you cheeky ass—"

"Yaas, you awfully cheeky wottah!" said Arthur Augustus, looking in at the door. "I have come to see you fellows about that. Blake says that if you play 'Catching the Colonel,' he will have to be the colonel. I wegard that as wubbish!"

"Quite right!"
"Hewwies says he ought to be the colonel, and Dig says the same, and I have told them quite plainly that they are a pair of asses!"



"Hear, hear!"
"The fact is, of course, that I had bettah be the colonel. In the title wole of a play you wequiah a fellow of tact and judgment."

"Fathead!"
"Weally, Lowthah—"

"It's settled," said Tom Merry. "Lowther is the colonel. It's a special comic part, and he's studying Herr Schneider especially to work up the business."

"So that is the weason why you have been muggin' up German, Lowthah, I must wemark that I wegard it as playin' it wathah low down on Schneider. Schneider is wathah a beast, but I do not approve of pullin' his leg in this way."

"Which way do you approve of pulling his leg, then?" inquired Lowther.

"I do not approve of it at all. I twust you will now drowp the whole ideah!" said Arthur Augustus, with dignity.

"Certainly—I don't think!" murmured Lowther.

"You had bettah leave the colonel's part to me," urged Arthur Augustus.

"Impossible! You are a nut—"

"What?"

"And you can't be a nut and a kernel, too," urged Lowther.

"I did not come here to heah wotten puns, Lowthah. What part are you thinkin' of givin' me, I should like to know?"

"There's a splendid part for you. You wear evening dress all the time," said Lowther. "As stage manager I picked that part out especially for you."

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's brow cleared. He fancied himself in evening clothes, and Monty Lowther's words went far to pour oil on the troubled waters.

"Well, that sounds all wight," he admitted. "I dwess in evenin' clothes all through the play?"

"All the time."

"Well, I will take that part," said D'Arcy. "I am not specially keen about it, you know; but if there's a chawaetah who has to weah evening clothes, it's bettah to pick out a chap who can weah them gracefully. I'm your man."

"Good!" said Lowther, making a note on a sheet of impot paper. "D'Arcy

looks the part of Henry. The script will be given out to-morrow, Gussy, and you will be expected to be word-perfect in three days."

"That's all wight. I'm wathah a dab at learnin' things by heart. I suppose I come on the stage pretty often?"

"You are on the stage practically all the time, oftener than the leading actor."

"Oh, good! That's all wight, then."

And Arthur Augustus retired, satisfied. Tom Merry and Manners looked a little puzzled. Why so important a part should be assigned to the swell of the School House, who was certainly not a leading light in the Junior Dramatic Society, they did not understand. Monty Lowther took the book of the play from his pocket, and as the Shell fellows looked at it they understood.

"Henry—a waiter!"

That was the last name in the list of dramatis personae.

"A waiter!" ejaculated Tom Merry.

"Yes; character who wears evening dress all the time," said Lowther calmly.

"Suit Gussy down to the ground."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"The play takes place in an hotel," explained Lowther. "I'll make Blake, Herries, and Dig extra guests at dinner. Figgins can be the hall-porter. He's big, and will look all right in a coat and a gold-laced cap. Kerr will take the part of Lieutenant Fred Lynn, the hero!"

"Hold on! Where do we come in?" demanded Tom Merry.

"You come in as policemen."

"Wha-at?"

"Two policemen are required, and they will do for your parts beautifully."

"Look here, I'm going to be something better than a bobby!" roared Manners.

"Shush! A member of his Majesty's Police Force is a respectable person, I suppose? It's an honour to take the part of a bobby."

"You can put me down for the lieutenant, the hero!"

"Impossible! That will require acting!"

"You silly chump! Can't I act?"

"The giddy goat, yes; but a naval lieutenant, that's rather above your weight!" said Lowther calmly.

"You see, the plot is that the colonel and his daughter are staying at the Grand Hotel, Slobberwasserbaden. The lieutenant is in love with the young lady, and the old colonel won't hear of it. Scene when he finds Kerr—Lieutenant Lynn—at dinner at the next table. Comic business by the colonel, who flies into a rage. Hall porters and waiters in horror at such a scene in the best hotel at Slobberwasserbaden. Fat manager—that's for Fatty Wynn—requests Lynn to retire. End of first scene. Colonel Potsdam's old enemy, Talbot—I mean General Frumpstein—has followed him to Slobberwasserbaden, intending to force him to fight a duel. General a dead shot. Colonel, funky, wants to keep out of it. Comic scene when general enters, and colonel hides behind the head waiter. I shall work that up splendidly."

"But what are we going to do?" roared Tom Merry and Manners together.

Lowther made a soothing gesture.

"Wait a bit; your part's coming. General Frumpstein is smitten with daughter, Fidelia, and gives up his deadly intentions, but colonel doesn't know it; sneaks about in a state of terror. Found skulking behind a pot of ferns on the terrace by Kerr—by Lieutenant Lynn, I mean. Lynn scares him by telling him the general is just

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round the corner. Colonel, in blue funk, begs young men to save him. Lynn promises to do so, on condition colonel gives consent to engagement. Colonel agrees. Lynn—

"But where do we come in?"

"Shush! Lynn undertakes to challenge the general and shoot him dead if he doesn't immediately quit Slobber-wasserbaden. Knows he is going, anyway. Comic colonel, peering over terrace, sees general making for the railway station with his bag. Enter Lynn. Colonel falls on his neck. Bless you, my children! Curtain!"

"But we—"

"Where do we come in?"

"Oh, they call in a couple of bobbies in the third scene, when the general is stalking the colonel round the hotel. You're the bobbies."

"Are we?" said Tom Merry grimly. "Well, we'll soon alter that! I'm the lieutenant!"

"So am I!" said Manners warmly.

"You can't all be lieutenants," said Lowther argumentatively; "and if a New House chap doesn't have a good bit there will be trouble with the fellows over there. But I'll tell you what—you shall be awfully swanky guests at the hotel, and we'll leave out the policemen."

"Rats!"

"Well, you can be waiters, if you like."

"Bosh!"

"Well, I'll make one of you General Frumpstein, then!" said Lowther despairingly. "Blessed if it isn't enough to turn a chap's hair grey to be a stage manager! Talbot can be a waiter."

"Well, I'll do the general, if you like," said Tom.

"What about me?" demanded Manners.

"Oh, blow you!"

"Look here—"

"Well, you can be the hotel manager, if you like, and I'll make Fatty Wynn the head waiter," said Lowther.

"Does he have to say much?"

"Well, he says 'Gentlemen, gentlemen!' several times when there's a row."

Manners snorted.

The prospect of saying "Gentlemen, gentlemen!" several times did not seem to exhilarate him.

"The chief difficulty," resumed Lowther, "is about the heroine. We can't get a girl to take the part of Miss Potsdam. I've asked D'Arcy, and he says his Cousin Ethel can't come. Cousin Ethel would have done beautifully, but she's away with her blessed Aunt Adelina. It's rotten luck! One of the fellows will have to make up as a girl, and the part won't be a success, I'm afraid. Luckily, the colonel has most of the business—"

"Trust you for that!" snorted Manners.

"Still, if we can dig up a girl from anywhere, we may fill that part all right yet," said Lowther, unheeding. "Now, I hope you're satisfied. My hat! It's too late to do my lines for Linton—just on bed-time!"

"You'll get a licking, and serve you jolly well right!" growled the dissatisfied Manners.

"Never mind; it won't take me long. What the dickens does Linton mean by bothering me with lines when I'm getting up a play? I'll take him at his word, and give him one line!"

"Eh?"

Lowther took a sheet of impot paper and wrote a line upon it. Tom Merry

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and Manners gasped as they read it over his shoulder.

"You're not going to take that to Linton?" howled Manners.

"Why not? It's what he said!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Didn't he say plainly: 'Write out the sentence, "I must not be idle and ridiculous," a hundred times!'" demanded Lowther.

"Ha, ha, ha! But he meant—"

"Never mind what he meant. That's what he said, and it's good enough for him! If he's got any sense of humour, it ought to make him chuckle!"

"Ha, ha, ha! Try it!"

"Well, I'm going to."

And Lowther blotted the line, took up the paper, and quitted the study.

The humorist of the Shell presented himself in Mr. Linton's study, and that gentleman gave him a severe glance.

"You have done your lines, Lowther?"

"My line, sir!"

"What! I gave you a hundred lines!"

"Then I—ahem!—misunderstood, sir," said Lowther blandly. "As it was only one line, I've left it rather late, sir. Here it is!"

Mr. Linton took the sheet, and read the line Monty Lowther had written. It ran:

"Mr. Linton must not be idle and ridiculous a hundred times."

The Form-master's face was a study for a moment. He looked at Monty Lowther as if he would eat him.

"Lowther!" he gasped.

"Yes, sir."

"You—you have written this?"

"Yes, sir. That's the line you gave me in class this morning, sir," said Lowther, with a face of perfect and dove-like innocence.

Mr. Linton started to his feet!

"I understand, Lowther, that you are supposed to be something of a humorist in the Shell. Your Form-master, sir, is not a proper subject for your humour, however. I think I must attempt to make you take a serious view of these matters, Lowther. Hold out your hand!"

Swish—swish—swish—swish!

Tom Merry and Manners met the unfortunate humorist as he came away from his Form-master's study with his hands tucked under his armpits, and apparently trying to fold himself up like a pocket-knife.

"Well, how did it go?" grinned Manners.

"Ow! Ow!"

"Wasn't he satisfied?" chuckled Tom Merry.

"Ow! Yow!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"The beast hasn't even a glimmering of a sense of humour!" groaned Lowther. "Ow! Yow! Catch me wasting any more topping jokes on him! Ow! Ow! Yow-ow-ow!"

And Monty Lowther groaned dismally all the way up to the dormitory. It was only too evident that humour of Lowther's peculiar brand was utterly wasted on the master of the Shell.

CHAPTER 6.

In For It!

HERR SCHNEIDER sat in his study. He was seated in his favourite armchair, with his favourite meerscham in his mouth, and he looked happy.

Tap!

"Gum in!"

Monty Lowther entered, and Herr Schneider smiled beamingly upon him.

It was a half-holiday that afternoon,

and most of the juniors at both Houses at St. Jim's had gone down to the cricket ground.

On Little Side, Tom Merry & Co. of the School House were playing Figgins & Co. of the New House in a junior House match.

Monty Lowther was a member of Tom Merry's eleven; but he was out of it that afternoon, and Hammond of the Fourth had taken his place.

Herr Schneider was naturally pleased. His beautiful and poetic language was much misunderstood and despised by the juniors as a rule, and it was gratifying to know that a junior schoolboy had given up a cricket match in order to penetrate the hidden mysteries of German verbs.

As a matter of fact, Lowther had not intended to carry his new scheme of "mugging up" German to that heroic extent. But Herr Schneider had offered him an hour that afternoon, and Lowther was too keen to keep on the right side of the herr to think of declining.

Hence he had stood out of the cricket match—not very cheerfully. But he contrived to present a cheerful countenance as he came into Herr Schneider's study, with a big book under his arm. He was fairly in for it, and he resolved to make the tremendous sacrifice with good grace.

"Ach! You haf gum, den?" said Herr Schneider, with a pleasant smile, removing the meerscham from his mouth.

"Eh!" For a moment Lowther fancied that the German master was asking him if he had any gum. Then he understood. "Yes, sir, I've come. You promised to help me with 'Faust' this afternoon, sir; but if you are busy—" Lowther added eagerly.

"Not at all, mein poy—not at all!" said Herr Schneider, beaming over his glasses and stroking his fat chin with a fat forefinger. "I am fery pleased. I can gif you an hour, and den I must go to mein pupil at Greenvale. Herr Schneider earned an extra honest penny by visiting a pupil at a village near St. Jim's on half-holidays. Now ve vill pegin, mein poy!"

Lowther was very pleased to hear that in an hour Herr Schneider had to start for Greenvale. The herr was so keen about German poetry, and so pleased with Lowther's newly discovered taste for it, that he would probably have kept the junior busy with "Faust" all the afternoon, if no other engagement had intervened.

Lowther brightened up considerably. If he escaped in an hour he would be able to play in the match after all. Tom Merry had done his best for him, and Figgins, the skipper of the New House juniors, had been accommodating. It was arranged that the New House were to bat first, and that if Lowther got away from his German in time he should bat for the School House in their innings. In that case Hammond of the Fourth would only field during the New House innings, and Lowther would play after all.

If Herr Schneider had to depart in an hour it was all right for Lowther. The New House innings was pretty certain to last as long as that. And if it ended unexpectedly quickly, Lowther would be in time to go in late on the School House list—last man in, if necessary.

Now that he was certain of not missing the match at all, Lowther felt much more cheerful and contented. True, it was a terrible bore to swot German on a sunny afternoon, when the rest of

the school were at play. But all the time he was taking stock of the unconscious model for the part of Colonel Potsdam.

What Herr Schneider would have said if he had known Lowther's real object can hardly be imagined. Fortunately he was not likely to know.

As the master expounded German to him, Lowther was drinking in, as it were, every trick of gesture, every peculiarity of speech or mannerism, and storing them in his memory for future reproduction.

With that inward satisfaction, he was able to bear the masterpiece of Goethe with becoming equanimity.

"Ach! Your English will not render him in his beauty!" sighed Herr Schneider, as he paused in the midst of a really noble passage. "You must tinkle him out, and den read and understand him in te Sherman, to get te beauty of tat."

"In jedem Kleide werd ich wohl die Pain,

Des engel Erdenleben fuhlen
Ich bin zu alt, um nur zu spielen,
Zu jung, um ohne Wunsch zu sein!
Was kann die Welt mir wohl
gewehren?
Entbehren sollst Du, sollst ent-
behren!"

"Beautiful, sir!" murmured Lowther. He was looking at the clock on the mantelpiece, and he had noted that the hour was more than up. From the cricket field came a yell of School House voices.

"Well caught, Tom Merry!"

Herr Schneider glanced at the clock and jumped up.

"Mein goodness! I shall be late, isn't it? Ach! Te beautiful poetry of Sherman—vat pleasure for you, Lowther, ven you read him can! I must meinself hurry."

Monty Lowther rose with alacrity.

"Don't go, mein poy," said Herr Schneider. "I have vun little favour to ask, tat I tink will be a pleasure to you."

"Certainly, sir."

"Meine nichte—meine niece shall arrive dis afternoon," Herr Schneider explained, as he took up his hat. "She gum to Rylcombe Station mit herself. I tink tat I shall be able to go and meet mein little Marichen, but it is to go to Greenvale tat I must. But I do not like tat Marichen shall arrive mit herself and no vun to meet her. Shall you go to te station to meet meine niece and bring her mit herself to te school, Lowther? It is not eferyone tat I would send for dis, but you are a good poy, and I tink tat you shall deserve te pleasure."

Monty Lowther suppressed a groan. Sincerely, at that moment, he wished that he was not a good boy and that he did not deserve the pleasure. His hope of playing in the House match, after all, was knocked on the head now.

He could not refuse. It would be discourteous in the first place, and in the second place the German master would have been offended, and those heart-to-heart talks, in which Lowther was mentally piling up so much "business" for the comedy, would have been stopped at once. In a few more days he would have been Schneider perfect, so to speak, and he could not afford to spoil it now.

"I—I—I—" murmured Lowther.

"It is tat you shall like to go, hein?"

"It will be a great pleasure, sir," faltered Lowther.

"Te train he gum in at half-past

tree," said Herr Schneider. "You have got time to go."

"But—but if Miss Erlen doesn't speak English, sir, there will be some difficulty," murmured Lowther, as a sort of last hope that the German master would pass him over and select somebody who could speak German.

"But meine niece speak goot English—ferry good," said Herr Schneider. "She speak him to te manner born."

"Oh!"

"Also you gum on ferry goot mit your Sherman, Lowther. I must hurry now, or it is tat I shall be late. Good-afternoon, mein poy! You will tell te fraulein tat it is sorry I am tat I shall not be mit meinself to meet her at te station, and tat she shall see me ven it is tat she is here nicht war?"

"Yes, sir," murmured Lowther.

And Herr Schneider jammed on his silk hat and hurried away.

Monty Lowther waited till he was gone, then he hurled the volume of "Faust" on the study carpet and



jumped on it. A little relieved in his feelings, he left the study and fetched his hat.

He came gloomily out of the School House, and as he crossed the quad several cheery voices hailed him from the tuckshop. The New House innings was over, and both sides had adjourned to the tuckshop for refreshment in the shape of ginger-beer before the School House went in.

"This way, Lowther!" shouted Tom Merry. "Come and have a ginger-pop. You must be feeling dry."

"Yaas, wathah! Woll up, deah boy. It's my tweat," said Arthur Augustus hospitably. Arthur Augustus was very cordial towards Lowther now. He had not yet discovered that Henry in the play was a waiter.

"Wherefore that worried look?" asked Manners. "Isn't the German finished?"

"Yes," growled Lowther.

"Must be," said Blake. "I spotted Schneider going out. Jolly lucky chap you are, Lowther, to get extra toot for nothing."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Oh, rats!"

"But he doesn't look pleased,"

grinned Figgins. "What's the matter,

Lowther? You're in time to bat for the School House, aren't you?"

"No."

"Bai Jove! What's w'ong, deah boy?"

"Schneider's niece is coming to St. Jim's to-day!" groaned Lowther.

"Well, she won't eat you," said Tom Merry, puzzled. "What does that matter?"

"Schneider's gone off to see his beastly pupil at Greenvale, and he's asked me to go to the station to meet his niece."

"Oh, my hat!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What are you cackling at?" demanded Lowther savagely. He was feeling very sore.

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

"It's poetical justice," grinned Kerr of the Fourth. "You've been pulling the Schneider bird's leg, and he's taken you seriously and given you a treat. Ha, ha, ha!"

"Yaas, wathah!" chuckled Arthur Augustus. "The way of the twans-gwessah is hard, deah boy."

Lowther snorted.

"Don't you want to go?" grinned Talbot. "She may be an awfully nice girl, you know."

"Twenty stone, I'll bet you!" chuckled Kangaroo of the Shell. "Twenty stone, with glasses and an umbrella and a German accent. Lowther will enjoy himself."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"However, it is up to Lowthah to play the game," said Arthur Augustus. "Aftah all, you should weally wegard it as an honah, Lowthah!"

"Oh, rats!"

"Poor old Lowther! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Look here, let Gussy go," said Tom Merry. "Gussy is a lady's man, and the fraulein would like him ever so much better. I'll put Hammond in your place, Gussy."

"Good idea!" said Lowther. "You go, Gussy. I'll explain to Schneider that we sent you because you're ever so much nicer."

"That would be quite cowweet," assented Arthur Augustus calmly. "And I would go with pleasuah, but it would be pwactically givin' away the match if I don't bat."

"We'll risk it," said Tom Merry.

"Wats! I wefuse to wisk a House match because Lowthah has got himself into a scwape, which serves him jolly well wight," said D'Arcy. "I weally do not approve of his conduct towards Herr Schneidah at all. I wegard it as playin' a silly, low-down twick."

"Silly ass!" growled Lowther.

"Weally, you know—"

"You've got to go, Lowther," said Fatty Wynn. "Have some tarts before you start, old chap? I'll stand 'em. Nothing like laying a solid foundation when you're going through a licking or anything very rotten, you know."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I tink Blake might go," suggested Lowther. "Blake has a very nice way in dealing with girls—"

"Thanks!" said Blake, with a chuckle.

"But I'm not going!"

"Suppose Kangaroo went? Kanga has a very taking way, too—"

"I may have a taking way," grinned Kangaroo, "but I'm not taking any now, thank you."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Time we were batting," said Tom Merry. "Sorry, Monty, old man! You've fairly landed yourself this time."

"Yaas; let this be a warnin' to you, deah boy!"

"Br-r-r-r!" said Monty Lowther.

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And the unhappy junior whose artistic unscrupulousness had led him into this scrape, walked away, and the cricketers chuckled and returned to the cricket field to finish the House match.

CHAPTER 7.

Lowther's Prize!

"MY hat!" Monty Lowther uttered that exclamation under his breath.

He had arrived at Rylcombe Station and taken up his post on the platform to wait for the three-thirty.

The three-thirty was a local train from Wayland Junction, and it did not usually carry many passengers, so there was not likely to be any difficulty in picking out Fraulein Erlen, though Lowther had never seen the lady before.

As a matter of fact, he was expecting to see a lady built on the same lines as Herr Schneider, and such a dame certainly would have been easily distinguished in a crowd.

Five or six passengers alighted from the train, but Lowther looked in vain for a stout lady with big glasses and an umbrella.

There were two or three farmers, a commercial traveller, and a soldier, and only one passenger of the gentle sex.

That, then, was evidently Fraulein Erlen, especially as it was obvious at a glance that she was German.

But—No wonder Lowther ejaculated "My hat!" No wonder the gloomy look vanished from his face, and he smiled cheerfully. For, instead of a sixteen-stone lady of uncertain age he had been expecting to see, he beheld a slim and graceful girl of about his own age, with flaxen hair and big blue eyes, and a somewhat timid expression.

Herr Schneider had not described his niece, so it came as a complete surprise to the junior who had come to meet her; and a very pleasant surprise indeed. Monty Lowther fairly ran across the platform to greet the foreign young lady.

She was standing on the platform, looking about her timidly, as if in expectation of seeing someone she knew. Probably she expected to be met there by her uncle from the school. Monty Lowther raised his straw hat in his most graceful manner.

"Fraulein Erlen?" he inquired.

The German girl looked at him. "That is my name," she said in English, with only a slight and very pretty trace of German accent.

"My name is Lowther—Monty Lowther. Your uncle asked me to come and meet you here, and take you to the school, as he has a very important engagement."

The fraulein smiled.

"You are very kind," she said.

"Quite a pleasure!" said Monty Lowther. "Let me take your bag. That's right. This way."

Monty Lowther felt as if he had captured a prize as he escorted Fraulein Erlen out of the station. He chuckled inwardly as he realised that Arthur Augustus D'Arcy would be ready to kick himself when he saw Lowther march in with the pretty fraulein.

Outside the station he passed two or three fellows belonging to the Grammar School, and smiled serenely as he noted their envious glances.

"Is it far to the school?" asked Miss Erlen.

"Only a short walk—quite a pleasant walk," said Lowther eagerly. He didn't

want to take the old station cab in the circumstances. He was willing to prolong the pleasure of that escorting as long as possible. "A beautiful lane. You will—ahem!—see our English countryside at its best at this season."

"It is very pretty!" said the fraulein, as they left the village High Street and entered the leafy, shady lane.

"Yes, isn't it?" said Lowther. "He was looking at the fraulein's charming face as he spoke. 'Lovely, I think.'"

"Is my uncle away from the school?"

"Yes; he's gone to Greenvale, but he'll be back soon after you get to St. Jim's. How well you speak English, Miss Erlen!"

"I have lived a long time in England. My father is in business in London," explained Fraulein Erlen. "I am to take my uncle to London, and then we go to Germany for the vacation."

"But you're going to stay at St. Jim's for a bit?" asked Lowther, remembering what Herr Schneider had told him.

"Yes—for two or three days."

"Oh, ripping!"

"Hein?"

"I—I mean, it's very nice at St. Jim's just now," stammered Lowther. "Beautiful weather, you know, and—and you'll be able to see a cricket match, too, if you stay over Saturday."

"I should like that," said the fraulein. "It was very kind of you to come and meet me at the station. I should not have known my way. Isn't that bag heavy?"

It was rather heavy, as a matter of fact, but Monty Lowther did not care.

"Light as a feather," he said mendaciously.

"You must be very strong," said the fraulein, with a smile. "You are one of my uncle's pupils at the school?"

"Yes. I'm awfully keen on German!" said Lowther, beginning to think that his new devotion to that language was rather a good thing, after all. "Of course, I can't speak it much. But we do it in class. We like it better—h'm!—than any of the other lessons. And—and your uncle helps me with German poetry out of lesson-time. He's very kind."

"Yes, he is very kind and good," said Miss Erlen.

Lowther whistled softly. It had never occurred to the juniors that the ponderous old German master was a human being, with the ordinary emotions of any other human beings, and that he had relations—a charming niece, for instance—who might be very fond of him.

The juniors weren't fond of him. German irregular verbs were not conducive to affection. But to the fraulein he was not a musty, crusty old German master. He was her kind Uncle Otto. It was quite a discovery.

"We—we all like him," said Lowther, drawing on his imagination a little.

"Why, this afternoon he gave me a whole hour explaining 'Faust' to me. It's jolly good of him to give up his leisure time like that, don't you think so?"

It was, as a matter of fact, but it had never occurred to Lowther until he mentioned it to Miss Erlen.

"He is always kind," said the fraulein affectionately. "We are all very fond of Uncle Otto, and he is so happy when he comes with us to Deutschland in the holidays. He is like a big boy when he comes home among the vineyards on the Rhine."

"My hat!" murmured Lowther.

The vision of Herr Schneider as a big boy, disporting himself among the vineyards, was rather a staggerer.

"What did you say?"

"I—I said it must be ripping—really ripping! I—I've been thinking of asking my people to let me go to Germany next vac," said Lowther boldly. "How jolly it must be on the Rhine—at—Munich, or—or Hamburg—"

"Munich is a great distance from the Rhine," she said.

"Munich!"

"You call it Munich in England."

"Oh, Munich sounds ever so much better!" said Lowther thoughtfully. "We spoil the names of foreign places by changing them into English. I—I've always thought so. I—I suppose you can read 'Faust' in the original, Miss Erlen?"

Miss Erlen laughed heartily.

"Why, of course, as I am German!" she said.

"Yes, of course," agreed Lowther, laughing, too. All the same, it seemed a wonderful performance for anybody, German or not, to read "Faust" in the original, when it was such a twister to Lowther himself.

"You are fond of German poetry?" asked the fraulein, with interest.

"I—I adore it!" said Lowther.

"There's some ripping lines in 'Faust'—perhaps you know them:

"'Mit deinen blauen augen,
Sichst du mich lieblich an!'"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Isn't that right?" asked Lowther anxiously.

"Yes, yes; but those are lines of Heine."

"Hiney!" murmured Lowther, pronouncing the name à la Shell, so to speak. "Who the dickens is Hiney? But they're jolly good lines," he added aloud.

"Very pretty," agreed Miss Erlen demurely.

As the lines meant in English, "With thy blue eyes thou lookest lovingly upon me," it was evident that Monty Lowther was getting on. Never had Lowther found the subject of German poetry so attractive.

He quoted more and more, attributing all sorts of mispronounced lines to all sorts of authors who had never heard of them, and he kept Miss Erlen in a continual smile until the gates of St. Jim's came in sight. And that walk from the village to the school had never seemed so short to the Shell fellow.

"Is that the school?" asked Miss Erlen, as she looked at the grey old building and the high tower over the trees.

"Yes, that's St. Jim's," said Lowther.

"Your uncle won't be back yet. There's a cricket match going on now. I should really have been playing, only—"

"Only you came to the station, instead," said Miss Erlen softly.

"That was very kind of you!"

"Not at all," said Lowther. "We can play cricket any day. But perhaps you'd like to see them—what?"

"Very much."

"Right—ho!"

Monty Lowther deposited the heavy bag in Taggles' lodge, with instructions for it to be taken to the Head's house, and escorted his charming companion to the cricket field.

The House match was still in progress. Most of the School House wickets were down, and Tom Merry and Talbot were batting with a couple more batsmen waiting their turn. One of them was Hammond of the Fourth. There was still time, therefore, for Lowther to bat, after all, if he chose. But he was thinking of anything but batting now.

Lowther was not, as a rule, a susceptible youth. He had chipped Arthur Augustus D'Arcy unmercifully on



Words failed Monty Lowther. He rushed at the two yelling juniors, grasped them in his tarry arms and hugged them. "Leggo, you rotter!" howled Tom Merry. "Chuck it!" gasped Manners. "Oh, help!"

account of his susceptibility to the fascinations of the fair sex. But, somehow or other, the deep blue eyes of the fraulein had worked wonders, having a most extraordinary and unaccountable effect upon the humorist of the Shell.

Monty Lowther was experiencing an extraordinary feeling just now as if he were walking on air. And when Cutts of the Fifth, passing them in the quadrangle, cast an admiring glance on the fraulein, Lowther looked at Cutts as if he would have liked to eat him.

All eyes on the cricket ground were turned upon the batsmen, who were hitting away in great style. But when Lowther arrived at the pavilion with Fraulein Erlen, all eyes turned from the wickets to Lowther and his companion.

Arthur Augustus gazed at the pretty fraulein through his eyeglass as if fascinated.

"Bai Jove!" murmured D'Arcy. "That boundah is in luck! If I had known—"

Arthur Augustus crossed over to them as Lowther found the fraulein a seat outside the pavilion to watch the game. He raised his cricket cap most graciously.

"Miss Erlen, I pwesume?" he said. Lowther glared at him.

"Your wicket down?" he asked.

"I have not batted yet, deah boy. Hammond and I are waitin'. Welcome to St. Jim's, Miss Erlen." And Arthur Augustus murmured almost ferociously to Lowther, "Pway intwoduce me, deah boy!"

"Go and eat coke!" murmured Lowther.

"Weally, Lowthah—"

"You'll be wanted at the wickets soon."

"Wats! You're next man in!"

"I'm not in the team, you ass!"

"Yaas, you are. Now you've come back, Hammond will stand out, of course."

Lowther shook his head.

"That would be too rotten on Hammond, as he's expecting to play," he replied. "Hammond is going to bat. I'm not so selfish as that."

"As a mattah of fact, I'm not vewy keen on battin'. You can go in next and take my place."

"Rats!"

"Well bowled, Fatty!" came a shout round the field.

"Bai Jove! Tom Meww's out!"

And Tom Merry came off the field.

CHAPTER 8.

Monty Lowther's Cheek!

TOM MERRY came up to the pavilion with his bat under his arm. He raised his cap to Miss Erlen, and Lowther reluctantly introduced him.

Somehow or other, Monty felt a perfectly idiotic desire to keep the fraulein all to himself. And the other fellows observing it, were naturally determined to be introduced. In the course of a few minutes Miss Erlen learned more names than she could possibly remember.

"Man in, Gussy!" said Tom.

"Lowthah is battin'—"

"I'm not," said Lowther.

"It's between Lowther and Hammond," said Tom. "You're next on

the list, Gussy. Get to the wicket. You're keeping the field waiting."

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy reluctantly tore himself away, and went in to bat. Harry Hammond came over to Lowther.

"I s'pose you're going in?" he remarked.

"Not at all," said Lowther affably. "I wouldn't deprive you of your chance to show what you can do in a Hause match, Hammond, old fellow."

"I don't mind standing out," said Hammond, a little puzzled. "It was understood—"

"My dear chap, I'm not going to be selfish. You're going in to bat."

Hammond looked inquiringly at Tom Merry.

"It's all right," said Tom, laughing.

"You bat, Hammond."

"Oh, good!"

Hammond did not have to wait long. Arthur Augustus' eyes, as a matter of fact, were more upon the pavilion than upon the bowler. He fell to the deadly bowling of Fatty Wynn before the over was finished.

"Wotten luck!" said Arthur Augustus, as he came off with a duck's egg to his credit, to meet several savage glares from the other batsmen.

"Rotten batting, you mean!" growled Manners.

"Never mind. We only want three to win," said Tom Merry. "Hammond and Talbot will knock up three, or we'll scalp them!"

But those three were not easy to knock up. Fatty Wynn and Redfern of the New House were bowling their best in turn, and, though the wickets

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did not fall, no runs came. The School House crowd watched the finish keenly, but Monty Lowther had no eyes for the cricket. For once he was utterly and supremely indifferent to the result, even of a House match.

Surrounded by juniors, all of whom had on their best manners and their best smiles, Miss Erlen did not forget that Lowther was her first friend, and that he had generously given up a cricket match in order to meet her at the station. Monty Lowther was first in favour, and that loyalty on the part of the German fraulein increased his good opinion of her. It showed that she was a girl of judgment.

The fraulein looked away towards the school gates.

"My uncle has not come back yet?" she asked.

"Not yet," said Blake. "May not be back for quite a long time. I was thinking—"

"I was thinkin'—," began Arthur Augustus.

"I was thinking," said Lowther, looking fiercely at the Fourth Formers with the eye that was farthest from the fraulein, "that you might like to have tea in the study, Miss Erlen. It would be an honour and a pleasure to us."

"Yes, rather," said Tom Merry and Manners heartily.

"I was just goin' to suggest—"

"Thank you so much," said Miss Erlen. "But I am to have tea with Mrs. Holmes. I am to stay in the Head's house."

"Bravo, Talbot!"

Talbot had just run two, and the score was equal now. A few minutes later Hammond ran a single, and a roar from the School House crowd announced that the School House had won the match.

Figgins & Co. came off the field. Lowther scented a new and general demand for introductions, and he rose.

"It's finished," he remarked. "May I take you to the Head's house, Miss Erlen?"

"Thank you!"

And Monty Lowther walked the fraulein off, under the envious eyes of the other juniors.

"Bai Jove!" ejaculated Arthur Augustus. "I wegard it as sheeah cheek of Lowthah to walk Miss Erlen off in that mannah!"

"What a stumming girl!" said Figgins. "Who is she?"

"Schneider's niece."

"My hat! Lowther was saying a twenty-stone—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"The beast is in luck," growled Blake. "Of course, I would have gone to the station if I had known."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Trying to keep us off, too," said Blake indignantly. "Blessed if I didn't have to stamp on his foot before he would introduce me. And he wouldn't have done it then, only he jolly well knew I'd introduce myself if he didn't."

"Yaas, I wegard Lowthah as a gweedy beast!"

"And he didn't want to go to the station," snorted Manners. "I'll bet he hasn't told the fraulein that."

"And he is studyin' her uncle to mimic him!" said Arthur Augustus. "Weally, someone ought to warn that charmin' girl against such an insidious boundah as Lowthah."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Look here!" said Figgins. "We must get round Schneider to stay a bit longer, and see our play. After all, he ought to see it."

"Good egg! We'll go in a body and request the pleasure of his company in

the audience," exclaimed Kerr. "After all, he is a decent old chap."

"Quite a ripping old gentleman, if you look at it in the right way," said Tom Merry thoughtfully. "Looking at it in the proper light, he's quite right to make us swot at German. We came here to learn those things, you know."

"It's rather rotten to find fault with a man because he has a sense of duty, I must say," remarked Blake.

"Yaas, I was thinkin' so. As a mattah of fact, I have always had a gweat respect for Herr Schneider's chawac-tah."

It was really surprising the high opinion the juniors had now of the master who had hitherto been far from popular in the Lower Forms at St. Jim's. Herr Schneider seemed to have jumped into popularity at a bound.

"We'll talk plainly to Lowther about this," said Manners. "He's jolly well not going to keep Schneider's niece all to himself. It's only decent to—look after her a bit while she's staying at the school, especially as Herr Schneider is such a good sort."

"Yaas, wathah! She must come to tea in Study No. 6."

"Oh, that's rot, of course!" said Manners. "She's coming to tea in our study."

"Weally, Mannahs—"

"Where has that boulder got to?" said Tom Merry, looking towards the Head's house. "He's gone in and hasn't come out."

"My hat!" ejaculated Blake. "He's quite mean enough to stay to tea."

"Oh, the rotter!"

"The—the swindlah!" exclaimed D'Arcy indignantly.

As the juniors would have jumped at the chance of going to tea in the Head's house while Miss Erlen was a guest there, it was difficult to see precisely where the meanness of Lowther came in. And it was clear that Lowther had secured an invitation to tea with Mrs. Holmes, for he did not emerge from the Head's house.

The cricketers left the field, and Tom Merry and Manners went to their study to tea. Monty Lowther did not join them there. He was happy elsewhere.

The chums of the Shell had finished their tea, and were reading up their parts in "Catching the Colonel," when Lowther came in at last.

There was a beatific smile upon Lowther's face. His chums glared at him.

"Where have you been?" demanded Tom.

"Mrs. Holmes was kind enough to ask me to stay to tea," said Lowther calmly. "Of course, it was more entertaining for Miss Erlen to have a fellow of her own age there as well as Mrs. Holmes and the Head."

"Did she try her weight at the station?" asked Manners sarcastically. "There's a weighing-machine on the platform, you know."

"Try her weight!" said Lowther, with a stare. "No. Why, you ass?"

"Then you don't know whether she's sixteen or twenty stone?"

"Look here—"

"You were doubtful about that, you remember," said Manners calmly. "One time you said sixteen, and one time you said twenty—"

"If you can't speak respectfully of Miss Erlen, Manners, you'd better shut up!" said Monty Lowther. "I think your jokes are in bad taste."

"Well, you ought to know all about jokes in bad taste," conceded Manners. "They're in your line. What price chumming up with a nice girl and imitating her uncle on the stage?"

Monty Lowther started.

"Oh, my hat! I'd forgotten the play!"

"Forgotten the play!" exclaimed his chums.

"By Jove, yes! I—I say, we shall have to change it!"

"Change the play?"

"Yes."

"Too late!" grinned Tom Merry.

"The parts have been served out, and some of the fellows are mugging them up already. Besides, it's a good comedy. It will bring down the house. Your part in imitation of the fraulein's uncle will be a regular shriek."

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Manners.

Monty Lowther groaned.

The horror of the situation had burst on him suddenly. He was to imitate Herr Schneider on the stage for the laughter of all St. Jim's, and Herr Schneider was the affectionate Uncle Otto of that charming fraulein! For the first time it dawned upon Monty Lowther that the unscrupulousness of a true artist might be carried too far. Lowther looked so distressed that his chums took pity on him.

"Never mind," said Tom Merry comfortingly. "They'll both be in Germany before that play comes off. It's not till Wednesday week, and they're both going on the Saturday or Monday."

Lowther brightened up.

"Of course!" he said. "I—I was quite knocked over for a minute. Mind, you chaps, not a word—not a whisper! Miss Marie is a stunning girl, and awfully intelligent for a girl, too; but she wouldn't understand. She would think it was insulting."

"Well, it is, isn't it?"

"Oh rats! I mean, she'd never forgive me if she knew I'd taken her uncle off on the stage. She's fond of her uncle, somehow."

"Give up the wheeze," suggested Manners.

Lowther shook his head.

"Impossible!" he said decidedly. "I've got the part simply perfect now, and it will be a regular scream. Of course, Herr Schneider is a good sort—a very good sort. I've always had a very great respect for Herr Schneider. A chap can't help liking a really fine character like Herr Schneider. As a pupil I respect him no end. But as an artist—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"As an artist," repeated Lowther, "I regard him as my legitimate prey. I'm going to play the comic colonel, as arranged. Miss Erlen will be home in Deutschland by that time, so it will be all right. She will never know."

"Home where?"

"In Deutschland."

"Do you mean Germany?" asked Tom, with a stare.

"Germans call their country Deutschland," said Lowther. "It sounds ever so much better, to my mind. Sounds very sweet and poetical, I think."

"Ha, ha, ha! Since when?"

"Oh, don't be an ass! Have you had tea?"

"Of course we've had it!"

"Anything left?"

"Not a crumb! What the dickens do you want? You've had tea with the Head, haven't you?"

"Well, yes; but—but—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Manners. "This reminds me of the time when Gussy was spoons on Glyn's sister. He lost his appetite."

"Don't be a silly ass!" growled Lowther, turning red. "Besides, I haven't lost my appetite. I'm jolly hungry. I was passing things to Miss

Erlen, and—and trying to talk German, and—and I didn't get much."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"If you silly asses are going to cackle like hens in a barnyard—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Tom Merry and Manners, in chorus.

"Then I'll jolly well go to the tuck-shop! I'm not going to stay here and hear you exploding like silly Chinese crackers!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Slam!

Monty Lowther retired from the study, closing the door with a bang that rang the whole length of the Shell passage. But Tom Merry and Manners did not heed him. They roared.

CHAPTER 9.

Tom Merry Thinks Of It!

HERR SCHNEIDER was surprised.

He had reason to be surprised. During the next two or three days his surprise went on increasing.

German had never been the most popular item in the curriculum at St. Jim's. Learned and poetical as that great language undoubtedly is, the St. Jim's fellows had never really "gone" for it. They had tolerated it because there was no choice about the matter, and that was all.

But a remarkable change had come over the School House juniors, and a good many of the New House fellows, too. From being a dry-as-dust subject, only barely tolerable in lesson hour, German had suddenly jumped into popularity. Fellows who had said that German gave them the toothache now took to German like ducks to water. In the German class Herr Schneider had a host of attentive pupils, who hung upon his lips, so to speak, for the pearls of wisdom that dropped therefrom.

And out of lesson-time, fellows awfully bored by German in the usual way, asked Herr Schneider to explain passages in Goethe, Heine, Körner, Schiller, Weiland, and all sorts and conditions of German poets. There was quite a run on Herr Schneider's leisure hours. His study was a remarkable centre of attraction. It was really extraordinary, and it was no wonder that the German master was surprised.

Perhaps the extraordinary change might have been accounted for by the fact that Miss Erlen was a great deal in her uncle's study.

Fraulein Marie was staying in the Head's house as a guest of Mrs. Holmes, who had taken a great liking to her. She spent a great deal of time in the German master's study. They would talk German together at great length, while the old gentleman smoked his meerschaum and Marichen knitted or sewed. She was a busy young lady, and her fingers were hardly ever still.

When fellows came in for "extra toot" Marichen would sit by the window, sewing, while her uncle imparted great knowledge of irregular verbs to the happy pupils, whose attention very frequently wandered from books to the window.

Whether the fraulein was aware of her great attraction was a mystery. She certainly showed no sign of being aware of it, and apparently did not care in the least about it at all. She was devoted to her uncle, and seemed to think more of the crusty old German master than of all the cheerful youths who learned German from him.

But that, as Arthur Augustus remarked, only showed what a really



ripping girl she was. Indeed, Arthur Augustus averred that she was as nice as his Cousin Ethel—than which there was no higher praise.

Herr Schneider was good-natured, and he was pleased by the popularity of his language and himself.

In the course of two or three days the German master recovered from his surprise, and he began to understand. Then he would chuckle to himself whenever an innocent youth would drop in with a German book under his arm.

When he kindly gave Blake a list of German verbs to learn by heart, and suggested to D'Arcy that he should write out the whole of "Faust" from beginning to end as a valuable exercise, it became evident that Herr Schneider was not wholly wanting in a sense of humour.

But Lowther was high in favour. His devotion to German had started before the arrival of the fraulein, and therefore was evidently genuine.

So Monty Lowther had the run of the German master's study, and took little walks with his kind master in which Miss Erlen generally took part.

After those walks his chums would ask him whether he was getting on well in his study of German; questions which Lowther answered very morosely.

As a matter of fact, Lowther was feeling a few tinges in his conscience over the way he was, practically, taking in the German master.

While Herr Schneider had been an unpopular and unpleasant taskmaster he was fair game; but now that the kinder side of his nature had been revealed it did seem a little bit "thick" to be taking advantage of him in this way.

But the artist in Lowther was too strong for his better nature.

The character of the comic German colonel, as he worked it out for the play, was certainly excruciatingly funny, and his comrades were almost as keen about it as Lowther was by this time. It was certain to bring down the house. And Lowther comforted himself with the reflection that Herr Schneider and the fraulein would be hundreds of miles away before the performance came off. Meanwhile, of course, he was very careful—more careful than ever—to keep it dark.

Miss Erlen had heard about the coming play, and regretted very much that she would not be at St. Jim's to

see it when it was performed. Monty Lowther regretted it, too, though if it had been possible for Marichen to see the performance it would certainly not have been possible for him to play his comic colonel as planned.

Meanwhile, the amateur dramatic society was getting on famously with the play. Lowther's part was so good that it put all the others in the shade, and there was so much "fat" in the part of the comic colonel that Lowther was pretty certain to take most of the biscuit.

In the early rehearsals the fellows had to admit that Lowther was screamingly funny in his part, based on the German master. He made them howl with laughter in the midst of rehearsal, so it was pretty certain that the part would amuse the audience.

Some of the amateur players were quite rusty about it. Lowther had bagged the best bit in the comedy, and he had bagged the German master as a model. But, besides that, he had bagged the fraulein, for Miss Marie remained loyal to her first friend. That she liked Lowther better than the other fellows was never in doubt. And the fellows knew that he would never speak to him again if she knew how he was "taking off" her beloved uncle in every rehearsal of "Catching the Colonel."

It was like Lowther's cheek; they all agreed upon that. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was specially indignant. When he discovered that the part of Henry, who appeared in evening dress throughout the play, was that of a waiter, and not even a head waiter, D'Arcy's feelings were almost too deep for words. He found some words, however, in which to tell the stage manager his opinion of him. But Monty Lowther went on his way regardless.

Arthur Augustus had to take the waiter's part or "chuck" it, and he decided to take it. Not that it was worthy of his powers, of course; but, as he confided to Blake, the only way to make a play a success was to have at least one good actor in it, even in a small part.

Satisfied or not with their parts, the youthful players threw themselves heartily into the preparations for the great occasion.

One difficulty still remained unsolved as the days passed—the part of Fidelia in the play. Who was to play the heroine was a question. D'Arcy's Cousin Ethel, who had sometimes helped the dramatic society on such occasions, was unavailable.

Lowther sadly admitted that there was only one fellow at St. Jim's who could play a girl's part successfully, and that was himself, and he was not available for that part. And the kind offers of a crowd of fellows to relieve him of the comic colonel's part, and leave him free to play the colonel's daughter, were refused with discourtesy.

Nobody was very anxious to take a feminine part in the play, and Lowther had no confidence in the ability of any of his comrades to do justice to the part. Digby went through the rehearsals and played Fidelia in a way that made his manager tear his hair.

"We shall have to get a girl to take the part somehow!" said Lowther desperately.

"Can't be done!" said Tom Merry. "Dig will have to do it, and, as the play comes off next week, you'd better make up your mind to it."

"I'll cut the part as short as I can," said Lowther thoughtfully. "Anyway,

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I shall knock them with the comic colonel, and they won't notice Dig's howlers!"

"My bit as the ferocious general will come out all right now I'm working it up," said Tom Merry. "Better put in a few more lines for me."

"Rot!"

"And I think the hotel manager ought to come on in the scenes," said Manners—"that is, if I take the part."

"Bosh!"

"Look here, Lowther—"

"Hallo! I've got to get to Herr Schneider's study! I'm due for a lesson."

"Cheeky ass!" howled Tom Merry.

"Is the fraulein there?"

"She generally is," said Lowther.

"Isn't it about time you chucked extra German? You must be Schneider perfect by now."

"H'm! I think I'll keep it up till—till Schneider goes."

"Till the fraulein goes, you mean!"

"Oh, go and eat coke!" said Lowther. And he left the study.

"Blessed cheek!" growled Manners.

"I jolly well wish Herr Schneider was staying for the play, after all!"

"The chaps in Study No. 6 were talking of a deputation to him to ask him to stay," said Tom Merry thoughtfully.

"Jolly good idea!"

"My hat!" Tom Merry jumped up suddenly. "Hurrah! I've got it!"

"What have you got?"

"The idea—the catch of the season! If we can get Herr Schneider to stay for the play—it's only a couple of days later than he intended to leave, you know—why, his niece will stay, too, of course!"

"Well?"

"Well, don't you see? She's very interested in the play, because she's done amateur theatricals at school. She said so."

"But what—"

"Don't you see—Fidelia? She's our Fidelia! She can take a part in the play—our play! She can play the colonel's daughter!"

"By Jove!"

"The part will suit her down to the ground!" exclaimed Tom Merry enthusiastically. "And she would do it if she's here; she's good nature itself. Besides, she likes acting in plays. Schneider would be pleased, to, and we—ahem!—want to please him."

Manners drew a deep breath.

"What a stunning wheeze!" he exclaimed. "Why, that gets us out of all the difficulties at one fell swoop!"

"It's ripping!"

"Hold on, though!" said Manners suddenly. "If the fraulein plays, what about Lowther's part? He can't take off her uncle under her very nose, you know."

"Oh, I forgot that!"

"He'll have to alter it," said Manners. "After all, I don't quite like the idea of caricaturing Schneider on the stage when he's been so decent lately. I thought it was rather too thick all along. Let him change it a bit. He can make it a comic Frenchman instead of a comic German."

"Anyway, we're going to have the fraulein in the play if we can manage it," said Tom Merry determinedly. "Why, it will be the making of the play. We've got a meeting of the dramatic society this evening, and we'll put it to the fellows and let it go by vote."

"Good egg!"

Meanwhile, Monty Lowther was basking in the sunshine of the fraulein's smile, so to speak, in Herr

Schneider's study, quite unconscious of what was impending.

CHAPTER 10.

A Minority of One!

"HERE we are!" said Figgins. The Amateur Dramatic Society had met in Tom Merry's study. Preparation had been hurried through, and the juniors were free for more important business.

The four chums of Study No. 6 were there, and Figgins, Kerr, Wynn, and Redfern of the New House, and Talbot, Kangaroo, and Glyn, and the Terrible Three themselves. It was a large crowd for a junior study. The members of the society brought their "script" with them. By this time most of the fellows knew their lines pretty well by heart.

Monty Lowther wore the worried look which a stage manager is fully entitled to wear.

"All here?" he said. "Sit down, if you can find room. I'm afraid we've got to settle on Dig to take the feminine part in the comedy."

Dig snorted.

"Have you?" he exclaimed. "I'll bet you the colonel's daughter will play up better than the colonel, and chance it!"

"Order!" said Manners.

"Well, I'm not set on the part," said Dig. "I'm only taking it because you other fellows can't do it. I'd rather have the part of a bobby myself."

"Gentlemen—" began Tom Merry.

"Ahem!" said Lowther. "This isn't a meeting of the debating society, Tom. Let's get to business. Speeches are superfluous."

"Rats! I've got a proposition to make, to get us out of all the difficulties regarding the heroine's part."

"Oh! You've thought of some girl who could do it?" asked Lowther eagerly.

"That's it."

"Good! Who is it?"

"Fraulein Erlen."

"Wha-a-at?"

"Hurrah!" exclaimed

Blake. "We're going to ask Schneider to stay and see the play, and I believe he will do it, and—"

"And she'd play if we asked her nicely," grinned Kerr.

"Yaas, wathiah!"

"It's a ripping wheeze!"

"Impossible!" exclaimed Lowther, looking rather agitated. "I don't want you to ask Herr Schneider to stay and see the play."

"And why not?"

"Because I'm imitating him in my part, fathead!"

"You said yourself that he wouldn't know it if he saw the play, that he hasn't any idea of how funny he is!" retorted Blake.

"Well, yes; but the fraulein would know. Girls are so jolly sharp—lots sharper than men. If he stays—she stays, and she'd spot it at once."

"Look here, Lowther, if you don't

want the fraulein to stay longer at the school, we do!" exclaimed Kangaroo warmly.

Lowther coloured.

"I—I do want her to stay, of course. I wish she wasn't going away at all. I—I mean—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"But I don't want her to see the play, in the circumstances. How could I give a comic caricature of her uncle under her eyes?"

"Alta! it," said D'Arcy. "I nevah approved of it at all. I wergard it as up to you, Lowthah, to chuck it up."

"Rot!"

"If you chawactewise my wemarks as wot, Lowthah—"

"Rubbish!" said Lowther emphatically. "I can't possibly alter the part



"For mercy's sake, try to put some more life in it!" begged a funeral." "Some of them are going out," sang out Figgins up already." "I'm doing my

now. It's too late. Besides, the character would be nothing without the comic business I've worked up for it. The part as it's written would go flat as a pancake. It's the way I've worked it out that makes it a certain success."

There was a general snort. Certainly, there was something in what Lowther said; but the amateur actors were by no means disposed to admit that the whole success of the play depended upon Monty Lowther alone. They were persuaded that their parts had, at least, something to do with it.

"You see, Lowthah, you're weally not the only beastly pebble on the beach!" Arthur Augustus remarked severely. "And, even if your part falls flat, Miss Erlen will make a wippin' success of the heroine's part, so that will be all wight!"

"Yes, rather!"

"Hear, hear!"
 "I tell you it won't do!" roared Lowther. "I'm not going to spoil my part by altering it, and I can't possibly play it as I've arranged it if the fraulein sees it. So that's knocked on the head!"

"Rubbish!"

"Yaas, wubbish and wats!"

"Bosh!"

"Come off!"

"Does this dramatic society consist of only a single member?" asked Figgins rather excitedly. "I'm a pretty good actor, and I've let Lowther stick me into a part as hall porter without turning a hair. But when it comes to leaving out a player that we need more than anybody else, I think it's time to tell Lowther to go and eat coke!"

really keener for Miss Erlen to stay longer at St. Jim's than any of the other fellows were.

It was a most unfortunate situation for Lowther—that he was forced to insist that the young lady whose presence was an endless delight to him should be excluded from the play. He realised, too, that the idea was an excellent one—that Marie was exactly the person for the part—if only the comic colonel had been based upon someone else, and not Herr Schneider. The "unscrupulous artist" in Lowther had landed the humorist of the Shell into a decidedly awkward position.

"Look here," he began desperately, "this isn't fair to me! I'd give anything to have Miss Erlen in the play; but—but you know it's impossible, unless I spoil the best part in the whole show—"

"We'll chance that!" said Blake. "No worse to have the colonel a failure than to have the colonel's daughter a failure. And you can't say you think Dig would do the part as well as the fraulein would!"

"Well, no, I hardly say that. But—"

"In the circumstances, a better player being found, I refuse to take the part," said Digby. "I decline utterly. I'm going to be a bobby!"

"Hear, hear!"

"If Dig refuses the part there's no alternative but to ask the fraulein," said Tom Merry. "Do listen to reason, Lowther!"

"But I tell you—"

"Put it to the vote!" exclaimed Blake.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Hands up for asking Fraulein Erlen to take Fidelia's part in 'Catching the Colonel,'" sang out Blake.

Every hand, except Monty Lowther's, went up. "Now hands up against it."

Lowther's hand was elevated in solitary state.

"Passed unanimously," said Blake. "It's agreed, then, that we go to Herr Schneider and ask him to stay for the play, and ask Marie to take a part?"

"Hear, hear!"

"I tell you I can't alter the colonel's part at this time of day!" exclaimed

Lowther. "I've got it fairly in my bones. I've made the character simply live. It must go on as I've planned it."

"Then chance it!"

"And offend the fraulein, you silly ass!"

"Well, you must please yourself about that!" said Blake. "We can't have the whole thing mucked up because you've been rather unscrupulous in finding a model for a funny part. I call it unscrupulous, and that's plain English!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Silly ass! It's art!" howled Lowther.

"Art be blowed!" said Blake.

"If you mean this, you fellows—if you're determined—" said the unhappy humorist.

"You bet!"

"Then I shall have to try to alter the part somehow. It will spoil it, and that

may mean a failure for the whole thing."

"Rats! Rubbish!"

"Perhaps some of us may be able to do a little bit towards saving it," sniffed Figgins. "I don't really believe it is quite a one-man show. There's such a thing as a conceited ass!"

"Well, perhaps the fraulein won't be able to play, after all," said Lowther, with a lingering hope.

"We'll jolly soon see about that!" said Blake. "If she stays she'll play right enough. And if her uncle stays, she'll stay. Let's go and catch him on the hop now, you fellows. He's always in his best temper when he's smoking his pipe of an evening. Strike while the giddy iron's hot!"

"Yaas, wathah! Come on!"

"Good egg!"

And the Amateur Dramatic Society trooped out of the study, leaving Monty Lowther alone, in a most unhappy frame of mind. He did not take part in the deputation. He felt that he could not. One half of him—the schoolboy half—wanted the fraulein to stay at the school for ever and ever; the other half of him—the artist half—wanted her to be gone before the play came on, to leave him free to make his great hit.

Whether he would be more pleased if she stayed or went he hardly knew himself. He waited in the study in a state of great anxiety to learn the result of the deputation to Herr Schneider.

CHAPTER 11.

Awkward for Lowther!

HERR SCHNEIDER was smoking the pipe of peace in his study. Fraulein Erlen, the charming Marichen, was seated on the opposite side of the hearth, reading aloud to him from a volume of German Lieder. The herr was looking very happy and comfortable. His niece's presence in the house had certainly made things more comfortable for the German master.

Indeed, the study looked so cosy and comfortable that it was difficult to see how the herr could be anything but happy there. And it was much tidier than of old, too, and there were flowers on the mantelpiece, and in the window, placed there by the little plump hand that had gathered them in the Head's garden, under the benevolent eye of the Head's gardener.

Herr Schneider was growing accustomed to plentiful visits to his study, but he looked a little surprised to see a dozen or more juniors when the door opened in response to his polite "Gum in!"

"Ahem!" said Tom Merry. "Good-evening, Herr Schneider!"

"Good-evening, mein poy!"

"I—I hope we're not interrupting, sir."

The fraulein had laid down her volume.

"Tat is all right. Vat is it tat is wanted, den?"

"Only a few words, sir," said Tom.

"The fact is, sir, we're a deputation."

"Mein gootness!"

"Yaas, wathah, sir! We wewesent the Juniah Dramatic Society—"

"You see, Herr Schneider, we're giving our play next Wednesday," said Tom Merry. "Before the school breaks up for our summer holidays, you know. It's rather an important occasion for us. But—but it seems that you are leaving on the Saturday or Monday before."

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ed Tom Merry. "You're acting like the chief mourner at ins, looking through the gap in the curtain. "They're fed best," said Lowther moodily.

"Hear, hear!"

"If Lowther can't make a success of his part without imitating Miss Erlen's mude, and if he can't imitate her uncle in her presence, let him resign the part to somebody who can do it," said Figgins heatedly. "I could suggest a good many New House fellows who'd jump at it!"

"I should be perfectly willin' to try that part myself—"

"I'll take it on if you like, Lowther," suggested Glyn. "I rather fancy myself in a part like that."

Monty Lowther glared at the dramatic society. Opinion was evidently against him. Hitherto he had ruled with a high hand, but revolt was in the air.

At the same time, Lowther would have been very glad if the fraulein had played—if only circumstances did not make it impossible—for Lowther was

"On the Monday," nodded Herr Schneider. "I am ferry sorry tat it is not tat I shall be able to see tat play myself, isn't it?"

"That's what we've come about, sir. We want you to see it. We want to ask you, sir, whether you couldn't possibly stay over Wednesday, and see the play. There will be a ripping audience—most of the fellows' people will be here for the sports and speeches, and so on—and you really ought to be present, sir. And if you would kindly manage to stay for that date, sir, you would be conferring a great favour on the whole of the Lower School, sir!"

That was really very well put, and it was impossible for Herr Schneider to avoid feeling pleased. Never had he dreamed that his company was so esteemed by the Lower School of St. Jim's. The German master beamed all over his plump face.

"You are ferry goot, mein poy!" he remarked.

"I hope you will be able to do it, sir. It is possible that Miss Erlen might care to see the play, too."

"Indeed, I should!" said Marie, with a smile.

Herr Schneider nodded.

"As a matter of fact, mein poy, I had already thought of staying off till speech day, after all," he said. "Because Mrs. Holmes she haf gootly asked meine niece if she like to stay for tat occasion, and I not wish to step in to ray of young peoples amusing demselves. I tink, den, tat I say it is ja. Ja wohl! I tink tat I shall stay off speech day, and so I shall see tat famous play. I hope tat it will be one great success."

"Thank you, sir!"

"Bai Jove, that's wippin'!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "I must remark, sir, that I weally considah you are a bewick."

"You are very good, sir," said Tom Merry. "And will Miss Erlen be staying, too?"

The German master smiled.

"Ja, ja; tat is so."

"Then perhaps, sir, Miss Erlen might care to take a part in the play?" pursued Tom Merry, encouraged.

Marie looked delighted.

Herr Schneider glanced at his niece and could have no doubt as to whether she would care to join in the amateur theatricals or not.

"It might amuse Miss Erlen during her stay at St. Jim's, sir, to join in the amateur theatricals," said Manners.

"And there's a part in the play that would suit Miss Erlen beautifully, sir," said Blake. "We were going to let a chap make up for the part, but that would have spoiled it. If Miss Erlen would take it, it would be topping."

"Weally toppin', bai Jove!"

Herr Schneider laughed good-naturedly.

"I leaf tat to Marichen to say," he replied. "Vat is it tat you say, Marichen? You like to do him?"

Marichen clapped her hands.

"I should like it so much," she said. "That is, if I am not taking away someone else's part. Of course, I should not like that."

"Oh, that's all right, miss," said Digby eagerly. "I was going to do Fidelia, but I'd much rather be a bobby."

"And you think I could do it well enough?" asked Miss Marie.

"Oh, sure of that!" said Tom Merry.

"Yes, wathah!"

"That's all right, and there's nearly a week to rehearse."

"And Lowther will coach you,"

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smiled Blake. "Lowther is a jolly good coach, you know. He's our stage-manager, and he will be delighted to get you to take the part."

"Then I shall be very pleased," said Marichen.

"Thank you, Miss Erlen," said Tom Merry. "It will very likely make the play a great success. We were simply stumped for a heroine. I've brought a book of the play for you to read over when you like. Your part's Fidelia."

"Oh, it will be delightful! I shall enjoy it so much!" exclaimed the girl, her eyes sparkling. "You are a dear, uncle, to stay here to please me when I know you want to be away in Germany."

"Tat is nozzing," said Herr Schneider. "I shall be ferry happy mit meinselb when it is tat I see you play yourself on te stage."

"Then it is settled," said Tom Merry. "We'll let you know about the rehearsals, fraulein. Of course, we shall have to rehearse—ahem—as often as possible, as it is only a week to the performance. Thank you so much! Good-night, Herr Schneider!"

"Good-night, mein poy!"

"Gutten Abend, fraulein!"

"Gutten Abend!" laughed Marichen.

And the deputation retired greatly satisfied. And Miss Erlen proceeded to read "Catching the Colonel" to her uncle, instead of The Leider she had been engaged upon when the deputation arrived.

Monty Lowther looked inquiringly at the deputation when they returned. It was evident from their looks that they had been successful.

"Well?" grunted Lowther.

"All right, deah boy!"

"Right as rain!" chirruped Blake. "The fraulein's staying! And she's going to play Fidelia. It will be a huge success."

"And what about my part?" said the unhappy humorist.

"Oh, blow your part!" said Blake.

"First rehearsal with Miss Marie in the cast to-morrow," said Tom Merry. "You'll have to be rather careful, Lowther. She's sure to be offended if you reproduce any of Herr Schneider's funny little ways."

Monty Lowther groaned.

"I shan't be able to help it. I tell you I've fairly got the thing going. I simply like the part. I'll do my best, but—"

"Well, if you offend Miss Marie, you'll have to stand out of the cast," said Figgins.

"What!"

"Yaas, wathah! We're not goin' to have a fellow in the cast who offends the only lady membah of the company!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus.

"Oh, go and eat coke!" growled the disgusted Lowther.

And the rest of that evening Monty Lowther was not happy. He was glad that the fraulein was not going away so soon after all. But the prospect of having to unlearn all that he had learned of his part—of having to give a "wooden" show instead of the "regular scream" he had planned, simply dismayed him, and took away all his satisfaction in playing the title role. He had to think out the part from an entirely new point of view—to rearrange it, and plan it out afresh in every detail.

He felt it was not to be done. He had the part perfect, and if he dropped it as planned, it would come out stolid and wooden. In the rehearsal he would be able to keep himself in check, and simply "walk" through the part. But once in the glare of the footlights, the

impulse to play the part in the most telling manner might be strong enough to banish all other considerations.

But Lowther kept that doubt to himself.

For if he had confided his fears on that subject to the rest of the dramatic society, it was extremely probable that he would have been barred from playing the comic colonel at all.

CHAPTER 12.

Doubtful Prospects!

MONTY LOWTHER sometimes wore a worried look in these days, but in some respects he was much to be envied, and the fellows certainly envied him. For to Lowther fell the task of helping the fraulein with her part, and coaching her in the "business" of Fidelia.

Marichen was very apt and her abilities as an amateur actress delighted Lowther. She soon had her lines by heart, and knew all her cues; and the slight German accent in her speech was, of course, suitable to the daughter of a German colonel in the comedy.

There was no doubt that the fraulein was a tremendous acquisition. With such a heroine in the part of Fidelia, the comedy was really assured of success. Even if Lowther's part went flat, it wouldn't matter so much now, as his chains comfortingly told him.

Lowther replied to such Job's comforters with painful frankness—indeed his remarks to his fellow actors at this time were, in the language of Truthful Jones, "frequent and painful and free."

But upon the whole, Lowther was greatly enjoying himself. The necessity for studying the German master's little idiosyncrasies was over now, and he was able to drop the extra "toot" to some extent, and devote his time to coaching Marie instead. And that coaching was undoubtedly a delightful experience.

As much of Fidelia's "business" was in dialogue with the comic Colonel Potsdam, Lowther often went over his lines with Marie, under the elms in the quad, or walking by the shining Rhyl. And at such times it was very difficult to avoid delivering the lines in the manner of Herr Schneider, as he had got them up.

Often and often Lowther had to suppress a specially telling "bit" because he knew that Marie would recognise in it some peculiarity of her dear Onkal Otto. But sometimes the "patter" came out unconsciously in the manner of Schneider, and once or twice Lowther noticed that Marie looked at him curiously.

"It is curious," said Marichen, one afternoon, when they were going over their parts under the elms after lessons. "Sometimes you speak your lines with a German accent, and at other times not. Is the colonel in the play supposed to speak with a German accent?"

Lowther coloured.

"Ahem! It can be done either way," he stammered. "We—we had an idea originally of making Colonel Potsdam speak broken English, but we dropped it."

"It makes the part funnier," said Marie.

"Yes, but—but upon the whole we've dropped the idea."

"You have had much experience in acting?"

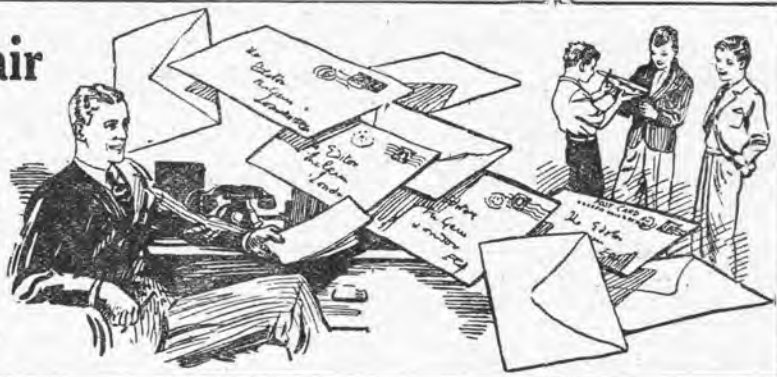
"Heaps!" said Lowther.

"I think you could put more into the part if you liked," said Marie. "It always seems to me that you keep something back in it, as if you are

(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! By the time next week's GEM is in your hands holiday-time will be right on top of us, and, appropriately, Tom Merry & Co. will be setting out to spend part of their vacation with Gussy and the other members of Study No. 6 at Eastwood House, ancestral home of the D'Arcy's.

Lumley-Lumley will also be leaving St. Jim's. But he is not going to join his father on the Continent, as he usually does, for Lumley senior is in South America. With the prospect of a lonely holiday before him, Lumley-Lumley is ready to jump at any invitation that offers, and he accepts gratefully when Cutts asks him to join a house-party to which he is going with Knox and Gilmore.

The junior knows that he is being asked because of his wealth, and because Cutts and his cronies imagine he will be easy to fleece, but Lumley feels quite capable of looking after himself.

The only thing he doesn't foresee is that the shady house-party to which he is invited is taking place only a short distance from Eastwood House and his chums.

"THE BOY WHO KNEW TOO MUCH!"

is the name of the story, and Martin Clifford has made it just as good as he knows how—which should be sufficient recommendation for anybody.

Full supporting programme—to borrow a phrase from the cinemas—will include another all-thrilling, all-laughing, all-enthralling epic of the early days of Greyfriars, starring Billy Bunter—the boy who ate too much—and Harry Wharton & Co.

"THE BIG SNEEZE!"

is the title, and it's certainly a story that is different.

When Mr. Quelch finds his whole Form sneezing their heads off one morning at breakfast, it doesn't take him long to guess that something has happened overnight. But what that something is he doesn't find out until later, and then—But read it for yourself.

My postbag is getting bulkier every day, and the office-boy, who collects foreign stamps, is getting very popular with his pals in consequence, for letters are arriving daily from the most exciting places. Perak, New Guinea, Trinidad, Gold Coast, China, Philippines, and Jamaica are just a few of the countries from which readers have sent me news.

So, just for a change, I'm going to set this chat aside for answering some

of the queries fired at me from readers overseas.

YOU'RE ASKING ME!

First one which comes to hand is from W. Broadley, of New Zealand, who has evolved the startling theory that Martin Clifford is dead! I told Martin this when he came in this morning, and I have his authority to say that, so far as he can tell, he is still very much alive and kicking. He pinched one of my best cigars to prove it.

Broadley bases his theory on the fact that the GEMS of long ago were not written in the same style as they are now. Maybe they weren't, because writers improve as time goes on. But, nevertheless, the stories of to-day and those of ten years ago were written by the same man, and if anyone can prove me wrong I will willingly eat my new hat.

Next is from Richard Rorke, of Pretoria, South Africa, who wants to know how old Manners and Lowther are. Your answers, Richard, are sixteen almost exactly, and fifteen years eleven months, respectively.

HOW DEEP IS THE OCEAN?

Emile Bertin lives in Jamaica (or are you just there for a holiday, Emile?) and he has been listening to the radio dance music. At least, that's my guess, because he wants to know "How deep is the ocean, how high is the sky?" and it sounds familiar.

So far as the ocean is concerned, of course, it varies tremendously, because there are mountains and valleys under water just as there are above it. The greatest depths, however, are in the Pacific Ocean, where, in places, six miles of line have been run out without touching bottom. Emile may not know it, but according to astronomers and geologists, the hole in the earth's surface now filled by the Pacific was once occupied by the moon before it was torn away from our world long ages ago.

The second part of the question is a lot harder to answer, because the air gets thinner and thinner as you gain height until it peters out altogether. Roughly speaking, the stratosphere starts about eight miles up, and continues to thirty-five miles up, after which there is nothing. Say thirty-five miles as answer to the question.

GOING DOWN!

Alan Young, of California, U.S.A., is

interested in aeroplanes, and asks if I can tell him exactly what a terminal velocity dive is. Here goes!

If you put the nose of an aeroplane straight down at a good height, with engine switched off, and let it fall, it will increase speed until it is dropping at about 160 miles an hour. No matter how far it descends, the force of gravity won't draw it earthwards faster than that.

If, however, you switch on your engine again, and dive straight down with the propeller "revving" under full throttle, the machine will come roaring out of the sky at 160 (gravity) plus its top speed. Suppose it can do 200 on the level, then its speed in a dive will be 360. And this is known as its terminal velocity.

Incidentally, it's a tricky thing to do on any plane, because quite apart from the ever-present danger that the wings may elect to come off, if you pull out of such a dive too fast you lose consciousness, which is awfully inconvenient when you're moving earthwards at five miles a minute. Don't you agree?

Is this all right, Alan? Or should I have written it in American?

CHASING RAINBOWS!

Most fellows have seen two rainbows, or even three, at the same time, but Gwen Apsley, of New Guinea, has seen eight all at once. She has written to tell me about it, and I'm hereby passing on an interesting fact.

Your eight rainbows don't constitute a record, however, Gwen, because in Pago Pago, an island in the Samoa group, there were once sixteen rainbows in the sky at the same time.

'Eee! It must have been better than illuminations at Blackpool!

LONDON ROCK!

"How do they get the word 'London' right through a stick of London rock?"

That, I think, is the best question of the lot, and it comes from Teddy Porter, who came over from India to see the Coronation, and has been trying to puzzle it out ever since he got back.

Like most teasers, it's simple when you know how. The rock is made in tremendously fat sticks, so fat that the wording can be inserted by means of moulds (which are afterwards withdrawn) and then rolled out to the thickness you buy it. Of course, as the stick becomes thinner, so the wording becomes smaller.

That clear?

Cheerio, everybody!

THE EDITOR.

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PEN PALS COUPON

10-7-37

keeping yourself in reserve. But such a part should be played with force, should it not?"

"I—I suppose so."

"It must be a very funny part—almost farcical," said the fraulein. "I do not think the audience will laugh if you do it so solemnly."

"I—I must try to make it funnier," said Lowther, with an inward groan. He could have made it funny enough if he had liked, but then the fraulein would have recognised the caricature of her uncle.

All the Junior Dramatic Society were looking forward to the first rehearsal in the Common-room with the fraulein in the cast. Marichen was so pretty and charming, and at the same time so modest and almost timid, that all the juniors liked her immensely.

She had her part quite pat for the rehearsal. All the other members played up uncommonly well, with the exception of Lowther. Lowther could have acted their heads off, as he told Tom Merry afterwards with a groan, if he had let himself go. But he dared not let himself go. It was only by the strictest self-control that he avoided doing his part on the Schneider lines once so carefully laid down; and his self-control made his part in the rehearsal more wooden than ever.

When the rehearsal was over, the juniors warmly congratulated the fraulein on the perfection of her part.

"We're all getting on rippingly," said Figgins, "with one exception."

"Yaas, I must remark that Lowther's part goes awfully heavy," said D'Arcy.

"You must manage to put a bit more life into it, somehow, Lowther," said Kerr, with a shake of the head. "You can't go through a part like the comic colonel in the manner of a tailor's dummy or a wooden horse."

"Just what I was thinking," chimed in Digby. "If you don't feel equal to the part, Lowther, there's still time to find a substitute—for the good of the play, you know."

"I rather think Reddy could make it go," Fatty Wynn remarked reflectively.

"What do you think, Lowther?"

Lowther snorted.

"I think you're silly asses!" he snapped. "I can act your silly heads off, and you know it."

"Oh, draw it mild!"

"Kerr and I are the only actors in the school!" said Lowther savagely. "The rest of you simply walk through the parts."

"Well, you don't walk through yours," said Manners. "You roll through it. You bump through it! You—"

"Oh, rats!"

"Look here—"

"Well, you look here—"

"Pway weinembah there is a lady present, you chaps," murmured Arthur Augustus.

And the argument, which was growing warm, ceased all of a sudden.

Monty Lowther walked back to the Head's house with the fraulein. He was feeling very miserable. He knew only too well that his part was not a success the way he was doing it. He knew that the audience would yawn over the comic colonel, who was not at all comic in his new style, instead of roaring with laughter.

The amateur actors discussed Lowther freely when the fraulein was gone. They didn't want the performance spoiled. It was a great occasion—the greatest opportunity the Amateur Dramatic Society had in the whole year of showing their abilities before a really distinguished audience. It was too

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rotten if the effect was to be spoiled by the shortcomings of their actor-manager.

"Lowther ought to be talked to!" exclaimed Blake. "This can't go on. He's frozen on to the fattest piece in the play, and he's mucking it up. I don't see it!"

"Wathah not!"

"If he can't act, let him make room for a chap who can," said Herries. "He's stuck me into the play as an extra guest at the hotel. I don't mind if he can do justice to the leading part. But he can't."

"He can't, or he won't!" said Digby. "I'd be willing to take on the comic colonel, and let Lowther come in as a bobby."

But Tom Merry and Manners backed up their chum. They understood the difficulties Monty Lowther was labouring under. They could not help sharing the doubts of their comrades, but they were loyal to Lowther. They simply would not hear of his being asked to give up the part.

"Besides, he wouldn't give it up," said Manners.

"Have a vote on it, and make him," said Digby. "It's for the sake of the play. It's nothing against Lowther. If he can't do it, let him stand down."

"He can do it rippingly," said Tom Merry. "You know how he made us yell over it ourselves in the first rehearsal. He's had to drop the Schneider bisney on account of Miss Marie. You all know that."

"It comes to the same thing. He can't do it now."

"It's his part," said Tom firmly. "I dare say he will play up all right, somehow, when the play comes off. After all, we know that he's the best actor in the school, excepting Kerr."

"What's the good of a good actor who doesn't act?" growled Blake. "He's down on us like a sack of coke when he's not satisfied with us. And he does his part the worst of the lot. You must see that."

"Yaas, wathah!"

But Tom Merry was firm, and the players broke up in a very dissatisfied manner. It was too rotten to think that if they all did their best, and with such an acquisition as the fraulein, too, the play might still be "mucked up" by the failure of the leading part.

Afterwards in the study, Tom Merry and Manners ventured to hint to their chum that the dramatic society expected better things of him.

Lowther gave a dismal groan.

"You know how I could do it if I tried," he said. "I had the part perfect."

"But can't you think out some other wheeze?" urged Manners. "Couldn't you model the comic colonel on somebody else instead of Schneider?"

"It's too late," grunted Lowther. "I had the part exactly as it ought to be played. The possibilities in it were simply immense. Sometimes it comes out in spite of myself, and once or twice I've thought that the fraulein suspected something. Unless I speak the lines in a wooden way, I get unconsciously into the Schneider style. I have to go over them deliberately, or I should drop into it. If I once forget myself in the part—and that's what an actor must do to make it a success—then I should bring it all out as I've planned it, and Marie would recognise her uncle at once."

"But if you go through it in that stilted way on the day we give the play, the audience won't see anything in it at all," said Tom Merry.

"Do you think I don't know that?"

growled the unhappy humorist. "I've got to chuck up the biggest hit I ever had the chance of making—for the fraulein's sake."

"That's all very well. But what about the play?" snapped Manners.

"Oh, hang the play!" said Lowther crossly. "I'm not going to hurt Marie's feelings for the sake of a play. It's rotten enough for me, anyway; and I think you fellows might be a bit sympathetic, instead of ragging a chap."

"Oh, we back you up, of course," said Tom Merry, with an effort. "But it begins to look to me as if we've got jolly doubtful prospects. And it was going to be such a success."

"Do you mean that you want me to stand out, after getting up the whole thing?" demanded Lowther. "Well, I can't! It isn't only that it's my part, but—there are other reasons. The fraulein would be disappointed if I wasn't in it."

"Why should she mind?" asked Manners.

The only reply to that was a snort.

"Oh, there's no arguing with you!" growled Manners.

"Then shut up!" said Lowther. And his chums shut up; but they were far from satisfied.

CHAPTER 13.

'The Great Occasion!'

THE great day arrived at last.

There had been continual rehearsals of late by the Junior Dramatic Society, and the comedy was going strong, with the single exception of the leading part.

Monty Lowther still failed to give satisfaction to his fellow actors.

But the fraulein, in the part of Fidelia, was a dream, as the juniors declared. And all the other members were getting on famously. Fatty Wynn made an ideal head waiter; he had the figure for it, as his friends told him admiringly.

Tom Merry was very good as a truculent general; Manners was quite satisfactory as an important and imposing manager of a grand hotel. Kerr left nothing to be desired as a naval lieutenant. Figgins made an excellent hall-porter; Digby a very passable policeman; Kangaroo, Glyn, and Herries and Talbot passed muster as fashionable guests in the hotel. D'Arcy, Kerruish, Dane, and Redfern were excellent waiters.

Lowther held on to his part grimly. Whether he could do it justice or not, he was going to do it. His motive might have been only his natural keenness to act, or the fact that the acting would be with the fraulein, or the still more important fact that the comic colonel had to kiss fraulein on the forehead in the last act. His motives were probably mixed. Anyway, he was going to play the part.

On Speech Day there was always a big crowd at St. Jim's, and many things going on. Visitors arrived early, and many of them stayed late. There were school sports—now a minor consideration to the amateur actors.

The big event of the day—from the point of view of Tom Merry & Co.—was the great comedy of "Catching the Colonel," performed by the members of the Junior Dramatic Society.

Tom Merry had obtained permission to use the lecture-hall in the afternoon; it was required in the evening for the Sixth. The performance was therefore to be a matinee. The comedy

was only the length of a "curtain-raiser," and would occupy only an hour. Admission, of course, was free.

The friends and relations of the actors would alone have made a considerable audience. But, besides them, there would be a crowd of St. Jim's fellows, and many of their friends and relations, too. Some of the masters were coming, and certainly Herr Schneider. It was rumoured that the Head himself might come in with Mrs. Holmes.

The old quadrangle at St. Jim's presented an unusually lively scene that day, bright with unaccustomed gay dresses and hats.

Arthur Augustus' noble "guy'nor," Lord Eastwood, arrived early with Lady Eastwood, and they were much interested in the play. Arthur Augustus would have been very glad to tell them that he was playing the leading role; and he could not help observing a slight smile on his lordship's face when he announced that his part was "Henry, a Waiter."

"Just the part for you, Arthur," said D'Arcy's elder brother, Lord Conway, who was among the visitors.

"You will do it excellently, I am sure," said Lady Eastwood innocently.

"The success of the season, no doubt," smiled the earl.

"I'm afraid the play won't weally go as it ought," said Arthur Augustus, with a shake of the head. "Lowthah has the leadin' part, and he plays it wottenly. But we've got a wippin' hewoine—Herr Schneidah's niece."

"Herr Schneider?" said Lord Eastwood. "Your German master?"

"Yaas." Meanwhile, Tom Merry was welcoming his old governess and guardian—Miss Priscilla Fawcett. Manners' people had come, too, and Monty Lowther's uncle was there—somewhat less crusty than usual under the influence of the occasion. Old Mr. Lowther was rather a terrible old gentleman, and he had a way of staring directly at a fellow and ejaculating "Ugh!" that was quite unnerving. Manners dragged Lowther aside, after a talk with the old gentleman, and whispered excitedly in his ear.

"There's your chance, Lowther."

"Eh—what?" said Lowther. "What do you mean?"

"Your uncle."

"What about my uncle?"

"For a model," explained Manners. "He would be worth a fortune to any comedian. You know you said yourself that all grown-up people are funny without knowing it."

"Look here—"

"Model the comic colonel on him," pursued Manners, with keen enthusiasm. "Make him stare like an Egyptian mummy, and gurgle 'Ugh!' all the time—"

"You silly dummy!"

"It will bring the house down!" said Manners, with conviction. "It nearly makes me howl when I just see him talking to a chap. On the stage it would be irresistible."

Lowther glared.

"If you can't speak decently about my people, Manners, you had better shut up, unless you want a dot in the eye!"

"But, you know, you said yourself an artiste can't afford to be scrupulous about hurting people's feelings," urged Manners. "Anybody is fair game for a genuine artiste. Take off your own uncle on the stage instead of somebody else's uncle."

"You dummy—"



"Marie, I'm sorry—I want to explain," began Lowther. "I—I—" "There's nothing to explain," replied the girl. "I understand now. You only wanted to be friendly with me so you could watch my poor uncle, to imitate him and make him ridiculous."

"I don't suppose he'd know. You explained that people never know how funny they are, you know. Everybody else would know, but you said yourself that that didn't matter."

"Fathead!"

"Well, I'm only quoting your own words, and I tell you your uncle is worth a fortune to any comedian. Where are you going, Monty, old man?"

Monty Lowther was stalking away.

Manners chuckled. It was very odd that a humorist like Lowther should not be able to see the humour of Manners' really excellent suggestion.

After dinner the amateur actors were very busy. The stage had to be prepared, and there was a great deal of work to be done. Tom Merry & Co. had expended a great deal of hard cash upon scenes, determined to spare no expense in getting up the comedy in a really first-class manner.

Members of the dramatic society who had no parts in the play were enlisted as scene-shifters; there was no lack of willing hands to make the work light.

The curtain was arranged so that it would go up and down without a great deal of exasperated persuasion. Everything was in apple-pie order. Polite juniors, with their best manners on, showed the audience to their seats as they began to arrive.

The company gathered in the Green Room behind the scenes, already made-up for their parts. The audience began to arrive in goodly numbers.

In places of honour in the front row with Lord and Lady Eastwood was Lord Conway and Lowther's uncle. Herr Schneider was an honoured visitor, and he sat next to Lady Eastwood, and she found him a very agreeable old gentleman. The seats filled with visitors, and behind them were ranks of St. Jim's

fellows, with quite a goodly number of seniors among the juniors, and at the back of the hall was a swarm of fags. Tom Merry looked out through a chink in the curtain and smiled with satisfaction.

"Simply a stunning audience," he said. "The place will be filled. There'll be standing room only soon."

"My hat! Here comes the Head!" said Blake, looking out through another chink.

"Schneider's there already."

"And Linton and Lathom."

"And Railton's coming in," said Figgins, taking a peep. "And Ratty, our giddy Housemaster. Lot he cares about comedies! He's come to look at Gussy's giddy lords!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"First time we've had an opportunity of performing to the nobility and gentry!" grinned Redfern. "I suggest a vote of thanks to Gussy for bringing a contingent from the House of Lords to see our humble little effort."

"Weally, Weddy—"

"Well, they're going to have a jolly good play!" said Manners.

"We've got to make it go with a bang," said Blake emphatically. "This is our first big chance before a really select and distinguished audience. We're lucky to get it. The play's got to be a success. If only the leading part isn't mucked up!"

"If!" growled Herries.

"Oh rats!" said Lowther crossly.

"Do keep off that!"

"Ach! But I am sure that the leading part will be a great success," said the fraulein, with her sweet smile.

And Lowther felt comforted. Fraulein Marichen did not know what a tremendous sacrifice Monty Lowther was

making for her; but she was just as kind to him as if she did know, and her kind encouragement was very grateful and comforting to the harassed actor-manager.

Even if he failed, he would have the consolation of knowing that he had failed for the sake of Mariechen, to spare her feelings; and, at all events, he would have her sympathy, though she would never guess the cause of his failure.

"Time!" said Tom Merry, with a last anxious glance over the company. "You fellows all ready?"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Then we'll ring up the curtain!"

The hour had arrived!

The signal was given, and the curtain went up without a hitch. The buzz of voices in the auditorium died away, and all eyes were turned upon the stage.

CHAPTER 14.

Lowther's Luck!

"SEHR gut!" murmured Herr Schneider.

And there was a murmur of approval from the audience.

The scene on the stage represented the dining-room of the Grand Hotel, Slobberwasserbaden, opening on the terrace. Half a dozen guests were dining at little tables, waited upon by quite professional-looking waiters—one of whom wore a monocle. No amount of persuasion had convinced Arthur Augustus D'Arcy that waiters in Grand Hotels did not wear eyeglasses. And it had been agreed, finally, that, as it was a comedy, there was no harm in D'Arcy being as funny as he liked. And certainly the sight of Henry the Waiter in a monocle provoked a smile from the people in front.

At a table well placed to be viewed from all quarters sat Colonel Potsdam and his beautiful daughter. Monty Lowther certainly looked the part of a comic German colonel, for he was a pastmaster in the art of make-up. He had avoided making himself look like Herr Schneider; but the bald head, the fringe of flaxen hair round it, and the yellow whiskers, certainly had a suggestion of the German master about them, and so had the rimless glasses perched upon a somewhat ruddy nose.

Fraulein Marie looked the part to perfection in the character of Fidelia. She sat very demurely toying with a knife and fork.

Behind the broad back of the colonel, at the next table, was Naval Lieutenant Lynn, alias Kerr of the Fourth.

And the glances that passed between Lieutenant Lynn and Fidelia, behind the back of the colonel, were very well managed.

Lowther had to speak first, and his opening speech, as originally planned, was a "shriek" in itself. But the way Lowther spoke it now, on his guard lest he should unconsciously slip into an imitation of Herr Schneider's peculiar mannerism and mode of speech, was dull enough.

"Ah, now we are at peace at last! Here we shall not be troubled by that fire-eating General Frumpstein, and no more of that impertinent young jackanapes Lynn!" said the comic colonel, not at all comically.

"Yes, papa," said the fraulein, with a glance over the colonel's shoulder at the young man at the next table.

"What are you looking at there, Fidelia?"

"Oh, papa!"

The colonel looks round and observes the impertinent young jackanapes at the

next table, and gives a snort of wrath. That snort of wrath had been carefully modelled by Lowther upon a similar snort, which often escaped Herr Schneider when an obtuse pupil found German verbs too much for him. But he felt that Mariechen would know that snort, as it were, and he dared not reproduce it.

So the snort was omitted.

"You—Lynn—here!" ejaculated the colonel.

Kerr rises and salutes.

"What a happy chance to meet you here, Colonel Potsdam, in Slobberwasserbaden!"

"Happy chance! How dare you come here?"

"How dare you gum here?" was how it ought to have been put, but Lowther was carefully eschewing the German accent.

"But, my dear colonel—"

"Away with you! Get out! I will not have my daughter persecuted by the attentions of a poppinjay in the English navy! Away!" roared the colonel.

"In this hotel all are free to come!" said Lieutenant Lynn.

"Bah! Call the manager! Have that man put out!" shouted the colonel to the head waiter.

"But, my dear colonel—"

Expostulations of head waiter, other waiters, then of the manager—comic colonel growing more and more violent and unreasonable. Lowther, as the comic colonel in a rage, founded upon Herr Schneider in a rage, had made his fellow-actors almost weep with laughter in the early rehearsals. But now it was tame—very tame. The audience did not laugh. The colonel's rage did not seem very outrageous, and his want of fire damped the scene. All the actors felt it, as well as the audience.

The scene, which should have been a shriek of laughter from beginning to end, went on without a single smile from the audience, and with a chill of doubt and want of conviction in the actors. All depended on the comic colonel—and the comic colonel was not comic.

Once or twice, indeed, there came a gleam of humour from Lowther as he forgot himself and relapsed into the part as it should have been played. But he quickly remembered who was present, and pulled up short, falling once or twice into such confusion in consequence that he forgot his lines, and Manners and Blake had to "gag" to fill a blank.

The first scene, therefore, dragged by without a laugh, in a chill of silence, and people in the lecture-room were trying not to yawn.

The curtain went down on the first scene, and there was some faint-hearted hand-clapping, evidently dictated wholly by politeness on the part of the visitors.

Behind the curtain the actors were almost in despair.

"For mercy's sake, try to put a bit more life into it, Lowther!" said Tom Merry, almost with tears in his eyes. "You roll through it like a tub."

"You act like a chief mourner at a funeral!" groaned Manners.

"The audience will be taking it for a tragedy, instead of a comedy!" howled Blake. "I believe I saw some of 'em crying."

"Nuff to make 'em cry, anyway!"

"Some of 'em are going out!" groaned Figgins, faking a peep through the curtain. "They are fed-up already."

"No wonder!"

"Pile in, Lowther!" urged half a dozen fellows. "You know what you can do if you try."

"I'm doing my best!" said Lowther moodily.

"It all hangs on your part," said

Kerr. "The play is simply built up round that. You'll have your chance in the terrace scene. For goodness' sake put your beef into it, or the audience will all clear out. We can't do anything unless you make your part a little bit alive. You made yourself the centre of the whole show, and now you're acting like a dead fish."

"Or a dying cod!" growled Herries.

Monty Lowther looked at the fraulein. She was silent and sympathetic. Evidently she felt that the lifelessness of Lowther's acting was ruining the play, just as all the other members of the company felt. If only she hadn't been there! But she was there!

"I suppose you think I'm an ass like all the rest?" murmured Lowther desperately.

Mariechen shook her head.

"No. Perhaps it is what you call stage-fright—heim?"

"Stage-fright!" said Lowther indignantly. "I've never had that! I could make the audience shriek if I liked."

Fraulein Marie opened her eyes.

"Then why don't you?" she inquired. Lowther suppressed a groan.

"I—I've had to alter the part! It was stunning. Now, I have to recite it like a kid reciting Shakespeare, or I shall drop into—into what I had planned, and—"

"But why not?"

Lowther could not reply to that question. He could not explain. If only Fraulein Marie had not been Herr Schneider's niece! If only he hadn't had that stroke of genius, in thinking of founding the character on Herr Schneider! He might have worked it up on some other lines—not so funny, perhaps, but good enough. But it was too late for that. He had the perfect part in his very bones, as it were, and if he departed by a jot or tittle from a sedate and stony manner he slipped immediately into Schneider's manner. Only by an iron self-control had he kept his artistic impulses in check during the first scene. He had felt the failure of the part even more keenly than the other fellows. To throw away laughs was anguish to the humorist of the Shells.

"You simply must buck up!" Tom Merry whispered to his clam presently. "Put some life into it somehow. We can't have a rotten failure, with all St. Jim's looking on, and all their friends and relations. Anything's better than that. After all, perhaps the fraulein wouldn't mind much even if she spotted that you were caricaturing her uncle. You could explain to her afterwards."

"She'd never speak to me again!" said Lowther gloomily.

"Well, even if she doesn't, that's better than spoiling the whole show!"

"Is it?" growled Lowther. "Do you want me to hurt her feelings, when she's been so ripping all along?"

Tom Merry groaned.

"Well, no you can't do it. Oh, you ass, what did you think of the rotten idea at all for, in the first place? We were all down on it. I suppose we've got to have a failure, and look a precious set of asses. And all the fellows are playing up as well as you let them. Can't be helped; the curtain's got to go up now."

"I—I'll do my best—"

"Get through it quick, and let's get it over and get out of sight!" said Blake bitterly. "That's the best thing that can happen to us now."

The curtain went up on the second scene.

The comic colonel, who was failing

so lamentably to furnish the required comicality, was discovered on the stage, lurking among the palms on the terrace of the Grand Hotel. General Frumpstein crosses the stage, breathing vengeance and fury. The colonel pops out of sight behind a mass of ferns. General Frumpstein meets Fraulein Fidelia, they talk; the general repents him of his truculence on discovering that Fidelia is the colonel's daughter, and they walk off. Then enters Lieutenant Lynn, and discovers the terror-stricken colonel in hiding.

The following scene ought to have been the funniest in the whole comedy. But it did not begin funnily. And Lieutenant Lynn breathed in the colonel's ear:

"Buck up! Buck up, and talk as if you were alive, you silly ass!"

Fidelia was off the stage now. Perhaps it was the fact that the fraulein was no longer present. Perhaps it was the artistic impulse in his breast that would no longer be denied. Whatever was the reason, all of a sudden Monty Lowther bucked up. The comic colonel was really comic. All the youthful comedian's carefulness dropped away like a cloak. He threw himself into the part on the original lines. And as he warmed up to it he forgot time and space. He remembered only that he was the comic colonel, and that it was his business to be comic.

Lowther was playing his part now! The first laugh from the audience was like wine to him!

And, like wine, it seemed to go to his head.

He threw himself into the part with zest, with energy. He spoke in Herr Schneider's remarkable accent. He stroked his chin with his forefinger in Herr Schneider's inimitable manner. He puffed, and he snorted, and he ejaculated in exactly Herr Schneider's manner.

The audience were electrified. Loud laughter greeted the earliest efforts of the newly awakened comedian, and increased the roars as he went on.

To the St. Jim's fellows, who recognised the caricature of Herr Schneider, the acting was especially funny. They yelled with delight. And the Head and the other masters, who knew very well where Lowther had picked up all those comicalities, tried to look stern; but they could not. They laughed with the rest. Loudest of all laughed Herr Schneider, who saw the funniness of the colonel on the stage, and never dreamed for a moment that he was the model of it all.

In the wings the amateur actors gurgled with merriment. Lowther was almost too funny for words.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the audience. "Ha, ha, ha!" echoed from behind the scenes.

There was only one grave face—that of Fraulein Marie Erlen.

She had watched Lowther, with delight at first, from the wings, glad that her friend was making a hit at last, that he was showing that he could act, that he was the best actor in the cast. But gradually it dawned upon her what he was doing, and her pretty face became very grave.

She glanced at her uncle in the seats, laughing and applauding in the innocence of his heart, and then at Lowther, reproducing with unmerciful exactitude on the stage every little trick of gesture and accent and manner of the unfortunate German master.

A gleam came into her blue eyes.

She understood.

That originally planned part, which Lowther had so unaccountably dropped,

SECONDS OUT OF THE RING...



The all-in wrestler opens a deck chair.

Half-a-crown has been awarded to C. W. Cox, 41, Holderby Road, Crofton Park, London, S.E.4.

was a cruel caricature of her kind Onkel Otto.

And now Lowther, doubtless urged by the desire of success, and the previous coldness of the audience, had thrown all consideration for her to the winds, and was caricaturing her uncle with merciless abandon.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

There were tears of laughter in the eyes of some of the spectators. There were tears of another sort in Fraulein Marie's eyes.

But Lowther had forgotten Marie by this time. Even when her cue came, and she had to appear on the stage again, Lowther was still the comic colonel, as originally planned. It was the artiest triumph, the artistic temperament galloping away with its owner, so to speak.

Even Marie's grave looks and faltering voice did not recall Lowther to a sense of what he was doing. For the time he was Colonel Potsdam, and he played the part to the very last drop of humour in it.

Never had an amateur company of actors achieved such a success at St. Jim's. The audience were taken by storm. They laughed, they howled, they gasped, they applauded. The lecture hall was in a roar. That killing scene atoned for all previous shortcomings. People who had gone out to yawn in peace were drawn back by the yells of laughter, and came back to join in the hurricane of merriment. It was a success that might have turned the head of any junior comedian.

The curtain went down at last amid thunders of applause. It had to go up again several times in response to shouts for Lowther. After Lowther had taken five or six calls there were still shouts of "Lowther! Lowther!" from the crowded hall.

Tom Merry wiped tears of laughter from his eyes.

He thumped Monty Lowther enthusiastically on the back.

"Oh, it was ripping!" he exclaimed. "Blessed if I didn't think Gussy's governor would have a fit! The Head was yelling like a fag! It was splendid!"

"I think it went off all right—what?" grinned Lowther.

"All right. It was a scream—a regular scream!"

"Hurrah!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Lowther glowed as he received the congratulations of his comrades. But the glow suddenly died out of his face—he remembered.

"Where's Marie?"

"Miss Erlen? Oh, she's here!" said Tom, looking round. But Miss Erlen was not there. The girl had slipped quietly away as soon as the performance was over.

Lowther gave a groan.

"Oh, I—I forgot her! She—she must have noticed—she knew—Where is she? I must explain—apologise!"

Lowther rushed frantically away in search of the fraulein. Tearing off his wig and moustache, and rubbing off his make-up with a towel, the hapless humorist dashed away. He ran down the passage that led to the Head's house, and as he passed a window recess he heard a sob.

"Marichen!"

The girl looked at him.

Lowther stammered hopelessly. What was the use of trying to explain? There was no explaining to be done. But he tried. Never had he realised how fond of Marie he had grown until this moment when he knew that he had lost her for ever, that she would never feel anything but dislike and contempt for him again!

"Marie, I—I'm sorry! I—I want to explain. I—I—"

"There is nothing to explain. So that is why you were friendly with me, because you were watching my poor uncle to imitate him and make him ridiculous! It was wicked—cruel!" Her voice broke. "And—and I thought you were my friend!"

"So I am!" groaned poor Lowther. "I—I swear—I—I didn't mean—that is, I never thought—I mean to say that—" Lowther was getting hopelessly mixed. "Don't you see? The—the—I—h'm—if—if—"

"Please don't speak to me any more!"

"But I—I—I—Marie—"

"Don't call me Marie! Don't speak to me! I despise you!"

And the fraulein walked away with her pretty little nose in the air, leaving Monty Lowther dumbfounded.

Fraulein Marichen did not speak to Lowther again before she left St. Jim's.

She departed with her uncle the next day, in apparent unconsciousness of Lowther's existence and of his imploring looks.

Lowther watched them drive away with a woebegone face, looking like anything but a successful comedian who had made the biggest hit on record.

He came back slowly to the School House in the deepest and bluest of blues.

"Never mind, old chap," said Tom Merry comfortingly. "You made a splendid hit, anyway."

Lowther groaned.

"The fellows are still cackling over it," said Manners.

Groan!

And Tom Merry and Manners went down to the cricket field and left him groaning.

(Who is the boy who knows too much? What does he know? You mustn't miss next week's magnificent holiday story.)

THE SCHOOLBOYS WHO TRIED TO CRUSH THEIR ENEMIES BY SHRUGGING THEIR SHOULDERS!

THE RIVAL SCHOOLS!

On the Warpath!

HARRY WHARTON rose as the chapel bell began to ring; and Bob Cherry sat up in bed and rubbed his eyes.

"Up you get!" said Harry. "We'll get in a little bit of footer practice before breakfast; it's a ripping morning!"

"Right-ho!" said Bob Cherry, tumbling out of bed. "It's getting cold of a morning now. Bunter, you young lazybones, why don't you get up?"

"It's so jolly cold!" said Bunter. "I think I can have another five minutes, Cherry, if I hurry over my washing. After all, a fellow doesn't want so much washing as all that. I don't hold with bathing every morning like Wharton. I'm afraid it wouldn't be good for my constitution."

"Get up, you lazy young grampus!" "I can have another five minutes—"

"Would you like a jam tart, Bunter?"

Bunter sat up and groped for his spectacles.

"Yes, rather, Cherry! I always wake up hungry somehow. Hand it over."

"If you think I'm going to feed you in bed, Bunter—"

"Oh, I don't mind getting out, come to that!" said Bunter. "I've got to get up some time, I suppose, and a jam tart will give me an appetite for breakfast." The Owl of the Remove rolled out of bed and shivered. "Where's the tart, Cherry?"

"Eh? What tart?"

"The jam tart you were going to give me."

"Who said I was going to give you a jam tart?"

"Why, you did!" howled Bunter. "Where is it, Cherry? You said distinctly—"

"I asked you if you would like one," said Bob Cherry. "I suppose a fellow can ask a question, can't he, without being supposed to have a lot of pastry to give away?"

Billy Bunter blinked at the humorous Bob Cherry with feelings too deep for words. He was inclined to get back into bed again; but the thought that he would have to rise, anyway, in a few minutes deterred him. He turned to his washstand and commenced the ablutions which some of the Remove facetiously described as a "cat lick."

Billy Bunter was extravagant in some things, but no one had ever accused him of being extravagant with soap and water.

The Famous Four were among the first down of the Remove, and they went out into the Close—Bob Cherry with his footer under his arm.

It was a keen morning, and the chums enjoyed a brisk punt about in the Close. They were coming in for breakfast, when they sighted Adolphe Meunier. He had come out of the Cloisters, and was sauntering along in the Close, and apparently did not see the Removites.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! There's Froggy!" said Bob Cherry. "It would be rather a joke to score a goal, as we did with Hoffman yesterday."

"The jokefulness would be terrific."

"Hold on!" said Harry Wharton.

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By Frank Richards.

(Author of the grand long yarns of Greyfriars appearing every Saturday in our companion paper, the "Magnet.")

"There's something up with Meunier. He's pretending not to see us."

"Some little game on," Nugent remarked.

The four juniors watched Meunier curiously. He was walking towards them, but his nose was high in the air, and his glance went right past them. He must have seen them, yet he gave no sign of doing so, and came straight on with elaborate unconsciousness.

"What on earth is the wheeze?" murmured Bob Cherry in amazement. "He's going to cut us dead."

"What's his game?" asked Nugent. "I say, Meunier—"

"Good-morning, Froggy!"

"How do you carry yourself this morning, Mossos?"

Adolphe Meunier halted and looked at the Removites as if seeing them for the first time. He did not speak; he shrugged up his shoulders to his ears—a proceeding that was witnessed with astonishment by the Removites—then he turned on his heel and walked away, and all without a word.

Bob Cherry's bright wheeze puts a speedy end to the foreign juniors' astounding scheme for getting the better of their rivals of the Greyfriars Remove!

The chums of the Remove looked at one another.

"Mad!" murmured Bob Cherry. "Stark mad!" agreed Nugent.

"The honourable ass is certainly right off his esteemed rocker," the nabob remarked. "There is no other accountfulness of his worthy fatheaded actions."

Harry Wharton was looking puzzled.

"Blessed if I quite know what to make of it!" he remarked. "I suppose Meunier's got something in his mind, and is working off a new wheeze, but I don't quite catch on to it."

They watched Meunier disappear into the Cloisters; then they went in to breakfast, still wondering at the remarkable proceedings of the French junior.

After breakfast the Greyfriars fellows streamed out into the Close. Fritz Hoffman was observed strolling by the Cloisters, and Harry and Bob walked over to him, with the idea of asking what was the matter with Meunier that morning. Hoffman did not appear to see them coming; he seemed to be intently gazing at the flight of a bird in the sky and had no eyes for anything else.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo, Hoffy!" "Hallo, Hoffman!"

Hoffman did not lower his glance from the blue sky; and Bob Cherry, considerably amazed at his unusual deafness, gave him a gentle dig in the ribs. Hoffman gasped and came back to earth again.

"Ach! Mein gootness!" "Hallo, Hoffy! How is your excellent health this fine morning?" asked Bob Cherry affably.

Hoffman did not reply.

He stared straight at Bob Cherry, and then slowly and deliberately shrugged up his plump shoulders till they threatened to dislodge his hat.

The Removites looked at him in amazement.

"Is that a new gymnastic exercise?" asked Bob Cherry.

Still Hoffman did not speak; he turned round on his heel and walked away. The chums of the Remove gazed after him, and Bob Cherry tapped his forehead.

"Mad!" he said. "They've all got it. I suppose. Perhaps it's catching, and Meunier has infected the lot of them."

Harry Wharton laughed.

"It's a new wheeze, Bob, that's all."

"But what does it mean?"

"I suppose they fancy it's awfully up against us."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"That's the only way I can account for it, anyway."

"My only hat! This is too funny."

"Hallo, what's the joke?" asked Hazeldene, joining them.

Harry Wharton explained.

"By Jove, then, that explains it! I just came across that German chap Limburger strolling by the Head's garden, and the ass shrugged up his shoulders and swung off. I thought he had a pain somewhere or something."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And the chums of the Remove were still chuckling over the absurdity when the bell called them into morning lessons.

Want of Capital!

HANDLEY, murmured Billy Bunter. "Hod letters, Lettertube—"

"Bunter!"

"Lettertube—or Beepaint? I wonder if there's a famous footballer named Beepaint? I say, Levison, have you ever heard of a footballer named Beepaint?"

"Bunter!"

Mr. Quelch repeated the word in his sternest tones, and Bunter heard it this time and gave a jump. He doubled up his copy of "Answers" under his jacket and blinked nervously at the Form-master. The Remove were in their classroom, and not supposed to be devoting their attention just then to football competitions, but Billy Bunter had hoped to escape the eagle eye of Mr. Quelch.

"Ye-e-es, sir! Did you speak to me, sir?"

"Yes, I did speak to you, Bunter. What is it you have there?"

"Here, sir?"

"Yes, there," said Mr. Quelch, with asperity. "Is it that absurd book on hypnotism again, which you were reading in class the other morning?"

HARRY WHARTON & CO. AND BILLY BUNTER IN ANOTHER SMASHING STORY OF THE EARLY DAYS OF GREYFRIARS.



Their noses held high in disdain, the foreigners drew level with the Removites. "Fire!" cried Wharton, bringing his squirt into instant action. "Ow!" "Ach! Himmel!" howled the aliens as streams of red ink shot into their faces.

"Oh, no, sir! I've given up hypnotism."

"I am glad to hear it, Bunter, although I have no doubt that you have taken up some other folly in the place of it."

"Oh, really, sir!"

"What book have you there now?"

"Caesar, sir. De Bello Gallico, sir."

"I mean what is the book you were reading and whispering to Levison about?" said Mr. Quelch severely. "Don't prevaricate, Bunter."

"I—I wasn't prevaricating, sir. I wouldn't do such a thing. I—I don't quite know what it is, but I wasn't—I mean I didn't—that is, I wouldn't—"

"Give me that book immediately."

"What book, sir?"

"The one you were reading!" exclaimed Mr. Quelch. "Any further nonsense, Bunter, and I shall cane you severely. Give me that book at once!"

Billy Bunter unwillingly drew his crumpled copy of "Answers" from under his jacket and passed it to the Form-master. The Remove watched Mr. Quelch with great interest, wondering what he would do.

"Ahem! You should not read this in class, Bunter."

"But I wasn't reading it, sir," said Bunter eagerly. "As a matter of fact, I read it last night while Wharton was writing out my imposition—I mean—that is—"

"While what?" thundered Mr. Quelch, who had been surprised that morning by Billy Bunter bringing in an imposition very neatly written and up to time.

"While—while—I mean, while Wharton wasn't writing my impot, sir!"

The Remove giggled and Harry Wharton coloured. Billy Bunter was one of those youths who always expect to have things done for them, and generally get them done by sheer luck.

It was no new thing for his impots to be written out by one or other of the chums of Study No. 1. But Mr. Quelch, feeling that he could not very well act upon an unguarded admission, passed over the matter.

"If you were not reading this paper, Bunter, what were you doing with it?"

"I—I was guessing the answers, sir."

"What do you mean?"

"The football competition, sir—those pictures. Every picture represents a famous footballer, and the first is Handley and the second Hodletters—"

Mr. Quelch smiled involuntarily.

"You must not look at the book in class, Bunter. You will take fifty lines; and I shall examine those lines very carefully to see whose handwriting they are in. I will keep this book for the present."

"Oh, really, sir—I don't mind. If you would like to go in for the competition, I would willingly help you guess—"

"Silence, Bunter!"

"I've filled most of them in, sir, and you can see them—Handley, Lettertube, Hodletters, MacLuckie—"

"Will you be silent, Bunter?" said Mr. Quelch, trying not to laugh.

"Silence in class! I shall cane the next boy who laughs."

And Mr. Quelch laid the paper on his desk, and the Remove resumed their interrupted excursion among Latin verbs.

When morning lessons were over Billy Bunter stopped at the master's desk to reclaim his book before he went out. Mr. Quelch had forgotten it, and he looked inquiringly at Bunter.

"Please may I have my book, sir?" said the Owl.

"Your book? Oh, yes, certainly!"

"I'm not in a hurry, sir, if you'd like to read it. There's some awfully interesting things in it—"

Mr. Quelch smiled.

"You may have your book, Bunter."

"If you'd care to go in for the football competition, sir, I shouldn't mind you using the answers I've written in. There are a lot more sets to come, but I haven't the slightest doubt that, with my splendid ability at guessing answers, I shall be able—"

"You may go, Bunter."

"Very well, sir. Could you tell me—if you don't mind, sir—have you ever heard of a famous footballer named Beepaint, sir?"

"Eh? What?"

"Have you ever heard of a—"

"You may go, Bunter."

"Yes sir, but—"

"Go!"

And Bunter thought he had better go. He followed the grinning Removites from the room.

"Hold on a minute, Wharton—Nugent!" he said, as he scuttled after them. "I say, Cherry, I'll have that jam tart now."

"What jam tart?" asked Bob Cherry, staring.

"The one you promised me when we got up this morning. I say, Cherry—"

But Bob Cherry was gone after his chums. Bunter followed them and ran into Bulstrode. He caught him by the sleeve.

"I say, Cherry, I'm awfully hungry, and—"

"Can't help it if you are," said Bulstrode, grinning.

"Is that you, Bulstrode? I'm so glad to see you. You used to lend me little sums when you were in Study No. 1, before Cherry came."

"Yes, it's a bad habit I've got out of," said Bulstrode, walking away.

"Really, Bulstrode, don't walk away when I'm talking to you!"

The bully of the Remove took no notice, and Bunter walked out into the Close. The Famous Four had gone. THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,534.

down to the football ground, where they were putting in all their spare time lately. A match between the Remove and the Upper Fourth was shortly coming off, and Harry Wharton & Co. had determined that the rival Form should be soundly licked. It was no easy task, however, to take on a higher Form, and the Remove eleven needed practice to keep them fit.

Levison was standing by the door chatting when Billy Bunter came out, reading his "Answers" as he came, and, of course, the Owl of the Remove walked right into him.

"Get off my foot!" howled Levison. "Oh, is that you, Levison! Will you take a squint at this picture, old chap?" "Certainly!" said Levison. "What is it?"

"It's a picture of a 'B' and a tube of lake. I've got a lot of answers for it already. Lettertube, Beepaint, Beelake, Beecolour. And Cherry thinks it's Blake, but that doesn't seem to me so good; it's too simple. What would you take it for?"

Levison looked at the picture thoughtfully.

"Well, what do you say to Lettercolour?" he asked.

"Well, that's not so bad, either. But is that the name of a footballer?"

"My dear chap, haven't you heard of Lettercolour, who plays outside-left three-quarter full-back in the Muggleton Mudcatchers?" asked Levison, in astonishment.

Billy Bunter rubbed his nose.

"He plays what, Levison?"

"Outside-right full-quarter three-back."

"Look here, Levison, if—"

"Perhaps I've got it mixed," said Levison. "But Lettercolour is the name you want. Shove in Lettercolour, Bunter, and it will make them open their eyes."

"I'll put it in. That makes five answers I've got for that one. You see, to carry out my scheme I shall want to send in a lot of sets. If you would like to rope in the prize-list, you can stand five bob, and—"

"Haven't it, Bunter, or I'd jump at the chance," said Levison. "Why don't you ask Quelch?"

"Mr. Quelch!" ejaculated Bunter, even his credibility staggered by the question. But Levison was perfectly grave.

"Yes, Quelch. Didn't you see how awfully interested he was in the thing when he took your paper away this morning?"

"Well, yes, I think he was."

"Then how annoyed he was when you wanted him to tell you the answer to a picture?"

"Eh? When I asked him if he had heard of a footballer named Beepaint, do you mean?"

"That's it. He didn't want to give the answer away."

"Dear me! I shouldn't wonder," said Bunter. "I suppose he's going in for it, and he wants to keep it dark."

"No need to jaw it all over the Remove, you know," said Levison seriously. "Form-masters are only human, and they might be going in for a football competition just as much as we do. If Quelch knew of your scheme, I haven't the slightest doubt that he would jump at it, and be glad of the chance."

"Do you really think so, Levison?"

"Well, try him and see," said Levison encouragingly.

Billy Bunter hesitated.

"He might get annoyed, you know."

"Why should he? A cat may look at a king, and I suppose a junior may ask
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a civil question of a Form-master. Put it to him straight. Ask him if he'd like to come into a scheme for getting rich quick, and explain it to him. Never mind if he interrupts you. It's for his own good. Go ahead!"

"Well, if you really think it would be a good idea, Levison—"

"It would be ripping."

"Then I'll do it. After all, Quelch is a decent sort, and I should be glad to put him up to a good thing like this."

"That's right. He's in his study now. Strike while the iron's hot."

Billy Bunter hurried off to Mr. Quelch's study, and Levison laughed till he was almost in hysterics.

Something Like Revenge!

"I THINK tat it vork vell, ain't it?"

"I zink zat you zink quite right, mon ami."

"Ve puts dem in deir place pefore."

"Zat is correct."

"Zat ve goes and insults zem again," said Lerouge, grinning. "Let us all go togezzor, and valk past zem and shrug up ze shoulders viz ourselves."

"Ach! Tat is goot!"

"Ferry goot!"

"Zen come along viz me, mes amis," said Adolphe Meunier.

The aliens were fairly on the war-path. A dozen or more of them were in the Cloisters, looking out upon the old green Close of Greyfriars. They were grinning and chuckling over the success of their new scheme—or what they regarded as a success.

"Come on, den," said Hoffman. "You leads, my dear Adolphe."

"Not so, Fritz. You takes ze first place."

"I not goes pefore, Adolphe."

"Zen ve goes togezzor, mon ami."

"Tat is goot!"

The French and German juniors walked or strutted into the Close. The rest of the party followed them. The Removites had come off the footer ground, and some of them were standing in a group, chatting, when the foreign youths came in sight.

Hoffman, Meunier & Co. marched on solemnly, their noses in the air. They went very close to the Removites, who stared at them.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Here they are again!" said Bob Cherry. "I say, Meunier, what are you doing off an organ?"

"Hallo, Hoffy! Where did you dig up that face?"

"What price frogs?"

"What's the matter with their necks?"

"Take no notice," murmured Adolphe Meunier. "Valk right on, and all of you shrug up ze shoulder ven I shrugs up mine viz myself."

"Ferry goot, my dear Adolphe."

And the aliens walked on, noses in the air. The Removites stared and giggled. Some of them guessed that it was a new wheeze; others thought that the aliens had gone suddenly insane, and some were too amazed to do anything but stare blankly.

"My—my hat!" gasped Bob Cherry. "Look at them! They're moved by springs, and somebody has pressed the button."

It really looked like it, for at the same moment, on the signal from Meunier, each of the aliens shrugged his shoulders up to his ears.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Nugent.

"Ach!" murmured Fritz Hoffman.

"Tey laff to cover up to defeat, ain't it? I tinks tat ve crushes dem dis time, ain't it, perfore?"

"Ciel! Zey vill nevair hold up zeyr heads, my dear Fritz!"

"It was a goot vheeze, my dear Adolphe."

The aliens swung round on their heels and walked off, their noses still in the air, their backs turned upon the Greyfriars Remove.

A yell of laughter from the Remove followed them.

"My only hat!" murmured Bob Cherry. "This is meant to be crushing. Do you feel crushed, Wharton?"

"Terribly!"

"Do you, Nugent?"

"Can't you see I'm upset?"

"The upsetfulness at the honourable frown of the esteemed rotters is terrific."

"Ho, ho, ho!"

The aliens looked back, a trifle disconcerted by the ringing laughter. Hoffman seemed worried for a moment as he saw the Greyfriars fellows doubled up with laughter.

"Ach! Tey do not look crushed, Adolphe."

"It is zat zey pretend," said Meunier. "Zey not know vat to do to hide ze mortification, and zefore zey laff."

"Ja, ja! I tinks tat tat is it."

"Zat is certainly correct, my dear Fritz."

"Den let us valk past tem again, my dear Adolphe, and crush dem."

"I zink zat tat is goot."

And the aliens turned again and proceeded past the group of amazed Removites, and shrugged up their shoulders, and turned on their heels as before. Bob Cherry held his sides and yelled. Nugent hugged the nabob and roared. The Removites roared, and roars of laughter came from all quarters.

"Ciel! How fearfully zey must be mortified to laff like zat!" said Adolphe Meunier.

"Ach! It is tat you are right pefore, Adolphe."

And the aliens, satisfied with their splendid success, ambled into the Cloisters. The Removites were still yelling with laughter.

Some of the Removites followed the aliens to the Cloisters, and in the gate Meunier & Co. turned back and treated them to a series of shrugs which would have put English shoulders out of joint.

Meunier was in the middle of a shrug which brought his shoulders above his ears, when Bob Cherry put a pea-shooter to his lips and let fly.

The missile caught the French junior under the chin, and he unfolded himself in remarkably quick time, with an ear-splitting yell.

"Vat is te matter?" demanded Fritz Hoffman.

"Ciel! Somezing stung me viz itself."

"Ach! I tink— Ach! Himmel!"

"Vat is ze mattair?"

"Somezing stung me also as well after," grunted Hoffman. "I tink tat it vas vasp."

"I tink tat is vas pea-shooter," howled Limburger. "Look at tat Sherry."

"Ciel! It is zat Sherry."

Bob Cherry had sent the second pea, and his shooter was to his lips again. As the aliens caught sight of it, the missile flew and caught Lerouge under the nose. The French youth gave a yell and rushed towards the Removites.

"Come back!" cried Adolphe Meunier. "Zat is not ze vay ve crushes zem! Ve insult zem, and zat is enoff."

"Come pack, ain't it!" exclaimed Hoffman.

But Lerouge did not come back. He rushed straight at Bob Cherry, and in a moment they were rolling in the Cloisters.

"Ve goes to help him, I tink," said Hoffman.

"Zat is correct, Fritz."

The aliens rushed to the rescue. The Remove crowded up, and there was a scrimmage. Lerouge tore himself loose from Bob Cherry, with a swollen nose. Bob had an eye nearly closed. Wharton and Hoffman reeled to and fro in deadly combat.

"Back up, Remove!" shouted Nugent. And the Removites rushed forward. The rush was irresistible. The aliens were hurled back and driven pell-mell through the gate into their own quarters.

Harry Wharton gave Hoffman a whirl that sent him spinning in after the others, and he bumped against Limburger and sent him down and rolled on him. The Remove crowded up to the gate, greatly inclined to return the invasion. But the aliens flung themselves at the gate and jammed it shut, and Meunier fastened it.

"Come out!" yelled the Remove. "Come out and be licked!"

"Ach! Peege! Pounders!"

"Ciell! Rottairs! Cochons!"

"Come out Yah! Come out and be licked!"

"Don't say anything!" gasped Adolphe Meunier. "Zey are vild because ve have insult zem! Zat ve insult zem again, mes amis. Follow me."

"Ferry goot!"

The aliens fell into line, and ranged just inside the gate, and shrugged up their shoulders at the juniors outside. The Removites watched them between the bars. The shoulders were shrugged as high as human shoulders would go, and then the foreign juniors turned on their heels.

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

The aliens marched off without turning their heads, and disappeared behind an angle of the red brick academy. The Remove tottered away, shrieking with laughter.

Mr. Quelch Refuses!

MR. QUELCH came hurriedly out of his study to go down to the dining-room, and at the same moment Bunter arrived at the door. The Form-master and the junior met in collision, and Mr. Quelch staggered back against the doorpost. Bunter dropped his glasses and gasped for breath.

"You—you ass!" he gasped. "You've knocked my glasses off, and if they get broken, I shall expect you to pay for them!"

"What!" said Mr. Quelch in a voice of thunder.

Bunter gave a jump.

"I—I'm sorry, sir! I thought it was Bulstrode."

"Oh, indeed!" Mr. Quelch did not think that the junior really meant to call him an ass, but he was annoyed. "Bunter—"

"Excuse me, sir. I've dropped my glasses. If you were to tread on them they would be broken, and—"

"Bunter!"

"And I haven't a second pair, sir. I—"

"They are lying close to your foot, Bunter."

"Dear me! So they are," said Bunter, recovering his spectacles and jamming them on his fat little nose.

"Thank you very much, sir!"

"And now, Bunter—"

"I was just coming to see you, sir, on an important matter—"

"What is it?"

"It's awfully important, sir, and—"

"Well, come into my study," said Mr. Quelch, in a tone of resignation. "I can spare you exactly two minutes, Bunter. I have to go into the dining-room to take the Form table."

"The Form wouldn't mind you being a little late, sir."

"Come to the point."

"Certainly, sir! Two minutes isn't very long, though, to explain a matter of such importance as this. However, I'll do my best."

"One minute is nearly gone!" said the Remove master grimly. "If you really have anything to say, Bunter, you had better say it."

"Yes, sir, certainly, only I get so confused when I am hurried. It has been suggested to me, sir, and I think it's a good idea, that I ought to tell you about my new scheme."

"I don't understand you, Bunter. What scheme are you speaking of?"

"My new scheme, sir."

"Is it something in connection with your lessons?"

"Oh, no, sir! It's a way to scoop in all the prizes in 'Answers' football competition."

"Eh?"

"What I want to work the scheme on a proper basis is capital. I've tried to get the fellows to take shares, but they're short of tin."

"Bunter!"

"Yes, sir. And it has been suggested to me that you might like to take a share in the scheme, sir."

"I! Bunter!"

"You see, sir, with my splendid ability in guessing the names of the footballers represented by the pictures, we only require capital—"

"We! Upon my word!"

"I was thinking of taking in four or five fellows upon five-bob shares, sir;

but if you cared to go in for it, you could supply the money and I would supply the brains—"

"Bunter!"

"I would keep all others out. A capital of a couple of pounds would be sufficient, and I would guarantee—"

"Boy!"

"Yes, sir. I would guarantee that we scoop in all the prizes—"

"Silence, Bunter!"

"Certainly, sir. But as I was saying, I—"

"If this is intended for impertinence, Bunter—"

"But it's a jolly good scheme, sir. You don't think there's any harm in football competitions, do you?"

"Of course not! I think—"

"And it's a jolly good paper. Full of interesting articles and funny jokes, and exciting stories—"

"Bunter!"

"If you think I couldn't guess the answers, sir, there's no doubt whatever on that point. I have a way of dropping on them at first glance. There's No. 3, for instance. Cherry and Wharton both thought it was Blake, but I knew it was either Beepaint or Lettertub all along."

"Bunter, your stupidity—"

"Not at all, sir. I'm not stupid, only common minds cannot always understand me."

Mr. Quelch did not waste any more breath. He reached out for a cane. Billy Bunter eyed that proceeding in alarm.

"I say, sir—"

"Hold out your hand, Bunter."

"My—my hand, sir?"

"Yes, and at once!"

"But I say, sir—"

Thwack! The cane descended upon



"Come out!" yelled the Remove. "Come out and be licked!" Safe behind the high gates of Friardale Academy, the foreign juniors lined up and contemptuously shrugged their shoulders at their enemies.

Billy Bunter's shoulders, and he gave a roar.

"Now you may go," said Mr. Quelch. "Ow! Thank you, sir. Ow!"

And the fat junior gladly scuttled out of the study. Mr. Quelch looked angry for some moments. Then the clouds cleared off his face, and he laughed.

Bunter did not stop running till he collided with Levison in the doorway. Levison caught him by the collar and steadied him.

"Is it all right, Bunter?"

"That you?" gasped Bunter. "No, it isn't all right!"

"Oh, I thought perhaps you were rushing off to the post office to get an order for a pound to send for copies of 'Answers'!"

"Oh, no, Levison! It won't work."

"You couldn't have put it to Quelch properly. Did you explain to him that you would supply the brains if he would supply the money?"

"Yes."

"And didn't he agree even then?"

"No, he didn't. It seemed to annoy him. The fact is, Levison, I've thought for some time that Quelch was a little off his chump. A reasonable man wouldn't turn up his nose at a chance like that, and there was no reason for him to lose his temper, that I could see. But he was awfully wild. He gave me a whack."

"Did he?"

"Yes. And he seemed quite annoyed."

"Tackle him again, Bunter."

"Not much," said Billy Bunter. "You can tackle him yourself next time, Levison."

"Oh, so you are the author of this

nonsense, Levison?" broke in the voice of the master of the Remove.

Levison swung round in dismay, to meet the stern eyes of Mr. Quelch.

"I—I, sir—" he stammered.

Mr. Quelch was frowning.

"I shall not take any notice of words accidentally overheard, Levison," he said. And Levison drew a deep breath of relief. "But I shall keep an eye on you."

"If you please, sir, I—I—"

"That is enough!"

And Mr. Quelch walked on with chilling majesty. Levison was very red, and Billy Bunter wore a wondering look.

"He seems to be wild with you now, too, Levison," he remarked. "I wonder if he is annoyed at your having suggested the idea to me of taking him into the scheme?"

"Oh, shut up, you young ass!"

"Oh, I say, Levison!"

Levison swung away. The Remove were coming in to dinner, and Bunter, still mystified, hurried off in the direction of Hall.

"Oh, shut up, you young ass!"

"Oh, I say, Levison!"

A Surprise in Store!

THE aliens were to the fore again when the Greyfriars fellows went out after dinner. They were watching from the Cloisters, and when the Removites appeared, Meunier and Hoffman and their merry men came into sight immediately. They walked past the Removites with their noses in the air, shrugged their shoulders, and turned on their heels.

Some of the Remove were ready to

"go for them," but Mr. Quelch's window was open, and the Remove master could be seen sitting within, and a "row" was not judged expedient in the circumstances.

"The asses!" grinned Nugent. "It's funny, but I'm getting fed-up with their grimaces, all the same."

Hoffman, Meunier & Co. shrugged their shoulders and walked away. They made no reply to the jeers and taunts of the Remove, but walked off quite satisfied with themselves and their revenge.

"Ach, it is petter as efer vas!" grinned Fritz Hoffman. "Tey not know vat to do mit demselves, I tink."

"Ze mortification is great," smiled Adolphe Meunier. "I zink zat ve makes zem sing small, mon ami."

"I tink to same, Adolphe."

"Ve vill keep on to insult zem and shrug ze shoulders at zem," said Adolphe Meunier. "I zink ve makes zem vish zat zey had nevair roused us."

"Ach, ve are terrible ven ve are roused, my dear Adolphe."

"Zat is correct, Fritz."

"Perhaps ve are a leedle bit too hard on tem, howefer."

"Not at all, Fritz. I zink zat ve ought to crush zem."

"Ferry goot. I agrees mit you, Adolphe."

And so they carried on the campaign; but the Greyfriars Remove were tired of laughing now. As Nugent had remarked, they were getting fed-up with the antics of the foreign juniors. The next time the shrugging expedition was carried out, without a master's eye being near, there were likely to be ructions.

There was a council of war in the Common-room after dinner.

"If you want my advice," said Bulstrode loudly, "we ought to mop them up. We ought to raid the Academy, and lay them out in their own quarters. You can leave me to direct the operations, of course. I fancy I have rather a flair for that sort of thing, you know. And I'll deal with Meunier and Hoffman myself. You ought to be able to handle one of the smaller ones."

"Who's going to rescue you?" asked ... grinning.

"Eh?"

"When Meunier and Hoffman are sitting on you."

"Bah!" grunted Bulstrode.

"I think it's a rotten scheme, anyway," interrupted Peter Hazeldene. "If you ask me, we ought to lay an ambush for them when they go out for a walk on Sunday afternoon."

"No good," Nugent pointed out. "We can't find out which way they'll go. Come on, Harry, it's almost time for lessons."

Bob Cherry was thinking it over. He thought it over during lessons that afternoon, and suddenly the silence of the class-room was disturbed by a loud and prolonged chuckle from Bob.

Mr. Quelch turned an eye like a gimlet upon him. Bob Cherry, realising where he was the next moment, turned crimson and sat dumb.

"Cherry, you appear to be greatly amused about something," remarked Mr. Quelch, in a dry, sarcastic tone.

"I—I—I— You see, sir—" stammered Bob Cherry.

"You will write out one hundred times, Cherry, the definition of Specific Gravity which you will find in your book," said the master of the Remove.

"You will bring me the lines before bed-time to-night. Do you think a hundred lines will be sufficient to impress it upon your memory?"



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"Ye-es, sir, I think so."
"Very good. We will now resume the lesson if Cherry has quite finished his sudden attack of merriment," said Mr. Quelch.

Cherry had quite finished his attack of merriment. No junior ever felt very merry with Mr. Quelch's eye piercing him like a gimlet. Bob Cherry sat abashed and more or less attentive till the lesson was over and the welcome time of dismissal came to the Remove. Nugent thumped him on the shoulder as the Remove left the class-room.

"What on earth did you suddenly go off like a cheap alarm clock for, Bob?" he asked.

"Like a what?"

"Well, like a hen with the croup, then."

"The cackleness was terrific," remarked the Nabob of Bhanipur. "Was it indeed the funniness of the physics lesson, or was it that an esteemed new wheeze entered flashfully into the honourable Cherry's brain?"

"I don't think anybody ever found physics lessons funny," grunted Bob Cherry. "It was an esteemed new wheeze, my inky friend."

"Get it off your chest, then, Bob."

"We are waiting anxiously to hear the honourable wheeze," purred Hurree Singh.

"Go ahead, Bob!" said Wharton encouragingly. "Leave the chuckles till afterwards, and we'll chuckle, too."

"Right you are. Now, I reckon that when we go for our gentle little walks

in the Close again we shall meet the shrugging brigade as usual."

"I suppose so."

"My idea is that when they march past and shrug their shoulders at us—"

"Go for 'em!" said Nugent. "It's about time they had another licking."

"Not at all, my fiery son! There have been too many rows with the aliens of late, and our respected Form-master is keeping a wolfish eye on us. Rows with the aliens are barred except when we can meet them in the seclusion of the Cloisters, where there is no eagle eye to watch our peaceable, persuasive methods of putting them in their place."

"Right enough!" laughed Harry Wharton. "But if we are not to go for them, what are we to do?"

"You can buy squirts at Mrs. Mimbles' shop."

"What on earth has that to do with it?"

"We can sneak any amount of red ink from one of the class-rooms."

"My only hat!"

"A squirt is a little thing you can keep out of sight—till it's wanted. Then it comes to the fore, and—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I think about twenty of us, to form a firing-line, would be able to make the aliens tired of marching past us shrugging their shoulders."

"I think so, too. Ha, ha, ha!"

Nugent thumped Bob Cherry on the back.

"Ripping!" he exclaimed.

"Well, don't bust my spinal column!"
"My dear chap, what does a spinal column matter at a moment like this?" said Nugent, doubling his fist for a more energetic thump, which Bob dodged just in time.

"Keep off, ass! Now, is it a go?"

"The gofulness is terrific!"

"Yes, rather!" said Harry Wharton.

"We must put a stop to their antics, and I think it's a jolly good way. It will be rather a surprise for Hoffman & Co. Ha, ha, ha!"

The Ambush!

"I TINKS tat yee are crush, my dear Adolphie."

"It looks like zat, certainment, Fritz."

"I tinks tat ve have been vatching for half an hour since to school was ofer, and tey have not come out mit demselves."

"I zink zat is correct."

"It is gewiss—it is certain den tat dey are crush."

"I zink you are right."

"Ten ve triumph!"

"Ciel! Ve triumph!"

"Pravo!"

The aliens were watching from the Cloisters. They were all ready to carry on the sneering and shrugging campaign, but the Removites were not in evidence. Fellows of other Forms, higher and lower, were to be seen in plenty in the quad. But the Remove, (Continued on the next page.)

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