

A FEAST OF FUN, FICTION AND FACT!

The **GEM** 2^d

All Star Programme!

"THE WRECKERS!"

By MARTIN CLIFFORD

"BULLY AND DANDY!"

By FRANK RICHARDS.

YOUR FORTUNE FROM THE
STARS, FUN COLUMN, ST.
JIM'S WHO'S WHO, STAMP
ARTICLE, PEN PALS, and
ILLUSTRATED JOKES.

IN THIS ISSUE.





HOW'S YOUR LUCK THIS WEEK?

Read what the stars foretell,
by PROFESSOR ZARRO.

EVERYONE is interested in their horoscope these days. The forecasts of the stars have proved to be uncannily accurate time and time again. Here are this week's horoscopes, specially prepared for readers of the GEM. To find what luck the stars indicate for you this week, look for the section in which your birthday falls.

January 21st to February 19th.—A week of remarkable changes in the sidelines of your life. Trouble will be noticeably absent, though there is a minor difficulty in connection with school or work. Be careful in any dealings connected with the number seven. An argument with a close friend or relation will lead to better understanding.

February 20th to March 21st.—An all-star week in connection with any sport, especially for those born early in March. You of this type are invariably good sorts. Someone will probably try to take advantage of this during the next few days, and may "put one over" on you. Welcome news from a sailor, or someone otherwise connected with the sea. Your fondness for home life may lead you into laziness, so don't spend all your time curled up in an armchair!

March 22nd to April 20th.—You work hard and play hard. There is a possibility of a setback because you have been overdoing things. Unexpected visitors will be calling on you after a journey. Your lucky colours this week are blue and white. A big chance will be offered the ambitious. A week when you will need courage.

April 21st to May 21st.—You will need your friends, and they will rally round you. Guard against the "blues"—apart from this, a time of good fortune. Unexpected money, but spend wisely, preferably on entertainment rather than buying articles you feel you want. Recovery of something you thought you had lost. Your best day will be to-morrow.

May 22nd to June 21st.—The most favourable prospects of this week are for you Gemini people. Gemini, your birth-star, means Twins, and your luck will run in pairs, so that each slice of fortune will be duplicated. Best for things connected with books, clothing, pictures, cycling, and motoring. Thin or short people especially favoured—Figgins and Fatty Wynn please note!

June 22nd to July 23rd.—Don't be too sensitive of what other people say or think about you. This week favours small matters, rather than those involving big

changes in your life. An unexpected advancement in school or in your job. A minor difficulty in connection with some writing matter—so go carefully in dealing with impots., homework, and the like!

July 24th to August 23rd.—Not a particularly eventful week, but everything will go smoothly. The one trouble to guard against is conceit or vanity, either in yourself or in others. You will receive an invitation to a party, or some other form of entertainment. Too much haste or impetuosity may cause a hold-up in your plans—as the speed-cop told the road-hog!

August 24th to September 23rd.—You will receive encouragement from your teachers, employers, or instructors. Are you inclined to play practical jokes? There are signs that by doing so you may get yourself into a difficulty this week. A meeting with an old friend, probably someone born in June or July. The colour grey and anything connected with animals will bring you luck this week.

September 24th to October 23rd.—Money comes in freely, but you will not have any special need of it this week because a quiet time lies before you. A minor argument or quarrel with someone of the opposite sex. A tangle in your affairs will be sorted out. A good week for any sort of business deal.

October 24th to November 22nd.—You will have to keep your temper to keep your friends. Best tendencies of this Scorpio period are for people born between October 29th and November 6th. Gny Fawkes' Day, November 5th, is an especially lucky birthday. All Scorpio people will find, however, that, on at least one occasion this week, they will have to stand up for themselves to avoid being pushed into a back seat.

November 23rd to December 22nd.—Health rather than wealth will always be your strong point, but this week you will be offered a chance to make some extra pocket-money. Luck is on your side, but this is, on the whole, a humdrum time for you. Best tendencies this week are in home life. Not a good period for sport. Lucky day is Saturday.

December 23rd to January 20th.—Plans will be made for holidays or travel. Best luck will come later in the week, to make up for disappointment earlier. You may not seem to be successful, but the work you do will bring reward later. Recklessness leads you into a difficulty. An interesting and exciting event connected with photography.

BIRTHDAY INDICATIONS.

WEDNESDAY, January 12th.—A surprise concerning you and your family during the coming year. Something that happened a long time ago will bring a lucky sequel. Much activity out of doors, probably including a camping holiday.

THURSDAY, January 13th.—Success in an important venture—such as winning a scholarship. Adventurous people prosper most; all will find themselves increasingly popular. Excellent prospects all round.

FRIDAY, January 14th.—Loss of so-called "friends," but you will discover by this who are your real pals. A disappointment in mid-year. Benefits and gifts from grown-up strangers. Guard against loneliness.

SATURDAY, January 15th.—An exceedingly pleasant, though not very exciting year. An energetic time, with success at work or school.

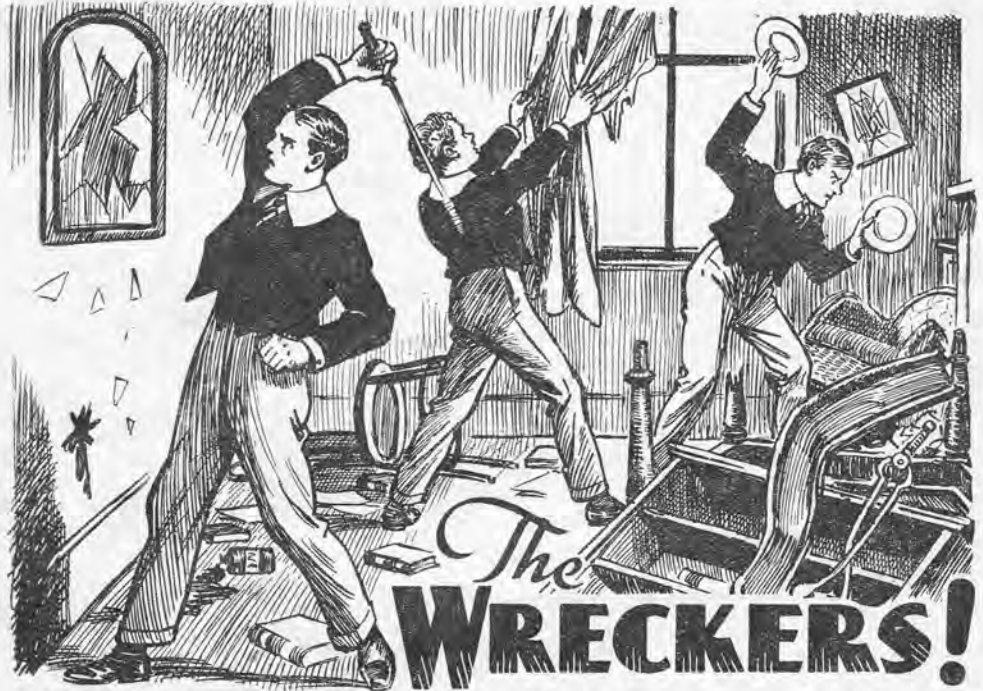
Your birthday presents will far exceed what you expect.

SUNDAY, January 16th.—Many ups-and-downs this year, but improvement all round eventually. You will have much to do with relatives. Possibility of making an enemy. Luck in money matters.

MONDAY, January 17th.—Good news comes unexpectedly, bringing exciting times. Specialised work succeeds rather than the everyday kind. One or two bad streaks, most probably in February and November.

TUESDAY, January 18th.—Minor mishaps and accidents will cause changes in your present plans, but will bring about a turn for the better in the things that matter. Much influence from relatives. A strenuous working year.

BLAKE & CO. ARE ON THE WARPATH! EVERYTHING IN THEIR STUDY HAS BEEN DAMAGED OR DESTROYED! BUT THEY CAN'T CATCH THE CULPRITS!



The wreckers went to work with wanton destruction, smashing every article in Study No. 6. They were determined to exact full revenge, and not a thing in the study was left unbroken or undamaged.

By Martin Clifford.

CHAPTER 1. Rally Round!

"WALLY wound, deah boys!"

D'Arcy of the Fourth looked excited. His eye gleamed with the light of battle behind his eyeglass. He rushed into the Junior Common-room in the School House in a tremendous hurry.

Tom Merry & Co. were talking footer. Tom Merry, Manners, and Lowther of the Shell sat in a row on the table, laying down the law.

Blake, Herries, and Digby of the Fourth were arguing with them.

The subject under dispute was a certain goal scored by Figgins of the New House in the last House match.

The Shell fellows were of opinion that Figgins would never have scored that goal if Herries, between the posts, hadn't been half asleep at the time. The three Fourth Formers maintained that the goal was due wholly and solely to the utterly rotten display put up by Tom Merry, Manners, and Lowther. Jack Blake, in particular wanted to know what chance a goalie had when the School House team

played a chump like Tom Merry in the front line, a muff like Lowther at half-back, and a mug like Manners at back.

The argument was growing warm, and the Fourth Formers, by way of proving that Herries had been first-rate in goal, were about to yank the Terrible Three off the table and bump them on the floor, when Arthur Augustus D'Arcy rushed in and called upon the whole party to rally round.

The disputants gave no sign whatever of rallying round. They did not even hear D'Arcy of the Fourth. They were all speaking at once.

"What I say is, that that goal——"

"You fatheaded Shellfish——"

"If Herries hadn't——"

"The way Lowther was beaten——"

"Why, you fathead——"

"And Manners, lying on his back, star-gazing, when——"

"Weally, you fellows——" exclaimed Arthur Augustus D'Arcy impatiently. "You might give a chap a little attention. I have requested you to wally wound."

"What's the row, fathead?" growled Blake.

"I wufese to be called a fat-head, Blake. I requiah your assistance, all of you, and I

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Wrecking a study out of revenge is asking for serious trouble—especially when that study belongs to Blake & Co. But the wreckers aren't worrying, they've got a perfect alibi!

repeat my request to you to wally wound. I have just been thwashin' Cwooke, Mellish, Levison, and Piggott—"

"All at once?" grinned Lowther.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Terrible Three and the chums of Study No. 6 seemed quite restored to good humour by D'Arcy's statement. Arthur Augustus, however, did not smile.

"Yaas, wathah! They are in the box-woom, you know. I have been thwashin' them all wound, and they had the feahful cheek to thwow me out and wold me downstairs."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I fail to see any weason for wibald laughtah. I was considewably hurt. My twousahs are feahfully dusty. In the circs, I wequiah you fellows to wally wound to mop up those wascals."

"Hold on!" said Tom Merry, laughing. "What have they been doing? Were you thrashing them for anything in particular, or only on general principles?"

"They are smokin' and playin' cards in the box-woom, Tom Mewwy. They have got young Wobinson of the Second Form there, and are teachin' him to play cards."

"Oh!" said Tom Merry, slipping off the table.

"I wegarded it as bein' up to me to chip in," said Arthur Augustus. "Young Wobinson is a young ass, and doesn't know any bettah, and I chipped in as his eldah, you know. I started thwashin' them all wound, and they collahed me and wolded me downstairs—"

"Come on!" said Tom Merry. "Crooke's rotten games don't matter to us personally, but he's not going to teach them to fags in the Second. This is where we go on the warpath."

"Yaas, wathah! Wally wound!"

The seven juniors hurried from the Common-room. Arthur Augustus had succeeded in rallying them round, and the question of the goal in the House match was indefinitely postponed.

Arthur Augustus led the way upstairs, past the Shell passage, to the upper staircase. They reached the landing outside the top box-room, a secluded spot where the merry "blades" of the School House retired for a "little game," unknown to masters and prefects.

Tom Merry kicked open the door of the box-room.

There was an angry exclamation from within as the seven juniors crowded in.

Five juniors were seated there on empty boxes, using a big trunk—the property of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy—as a card table.

Crooke, Mellish, Levison, and Piggott were frequently together, engaged in such occupations. The fifth member of the party was a little fellow with flaxen hair and blue eyes, who was making exceedingly wry faces over a cigarette—though nothing would have induced him to admit that he didn't like smoking.

Robinson of the Second had had a remittance that afternoon from a kind uncle, and the cads of the School House were kindly proceeding to relieve him of the trouble of taking care of it.

Robinson was experiencing the pleasures—or otherwise—of gambling. He did not look as if it were pleasant. Half an hour before he had been the happy possessor of a whole pound—and a great man in the eyes of the Second Form fags. Since then his pound had dwindled to three shillings, and he had nothing in return for his cash but a sickly feeling inside, the result of a cigarette Crooke had given him.

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"Your lead, Levison," Crooke was saying, when Tom Merry & Co. burst in, and the little game was interrupted.

Crooke looked round with a scowl.

"What do you fellows want?" he growled.

"Wush the wottahs!" shouted Arthur Augustus, pushing back his cuffs. "Thwash them all wound!"

"Clear off, you silly idiot!" snapped Levison.

"Do you want to be pitched down the stairs again?"

"Wally wound, deah boys!"

And Arthur Augustus started the ball rolling, so to speak, by rushing upon Levison of the Fourth and getting his head into chancery.

CHAPTER 2.

A "Stumping" For Four.

"WOW-WHOOOO!" roared Levison, struggling frantically. "Leggo! Gerroff!"

"Go for them, deah boys!"

Pommel, pommel, pommel!

Mellish jumped up and made for the door. Mellish wasn't a fighting man. But Jack Blake gripped him by the collar and swung him back.

"Not just yet," he said pleasantly.

"Let me pass!" roared Crooke, clenching his fists.

"Pass away!" said Tom Merry, stepping in front of him with his hands up. "You've only got to walk over me!"

Crooke did not attempt to walk over the captain of the Shell.

Piggott and Robinson sat where they were.

"Leave a bit for me, Gussy!" urged Monty Lowther, as the swell of St. Jim's pommelled the yelling Levison.

"Wats! Have you had enough, you wottah?"

"Yaroooh! Yes! Leggo!" roared Levison.

"Certainly, deah boy, if you have had enough!" said Arthur Augustus politely.

He let go, and Levison of the Fourth sat on the floor with a bump. He sat there and caressed his nose, scowling like a demon.

"What are you interfering here for, you cads?" said Crooke, between his teeth.

"Stopping your little game," said Tom Merry cheerfully. "Robinson!"

"Ye-es!" stammered the little fag.

"You beastly little blackguard! What are you playing cards for money for?"

"I—I know I've lost nearly all my tin," whimpered the fag.

"How much have you rotters taken from that kid?" demanded Tom Merry.

"Find out!"

"How much have you lost, Robinson?"

"Sus-sus-seventeen shillings!" mumbled Robinson.

"Very good! Give that kid back his seventeen shillings, you swindling rotters!"

"Go and eat coke!"

"Monty, will you buzz off and get a stump?"

"Certainly!" smiled Lowther.

Monty Lowther quitted the box-room.

Crooke made a movement to follow, and Tom Merry shoved him back without ceremony.

"You rotters!" hissed Crooke. "What are you going to do?"

"Lick you with the stump till you hand back the money you've had from that kid!"

"You—you interfering beast!"

The four young rascals exchanged furious

glances. They were fairly caught, and there was no rest for the wicked in their case.

Monty Lowther came back with a stump under his arm, and closed the box-room door.

"Here you are, O king!"

"Put Crooke across that box. We'll begin with Crooke!"

"Hold on!" exclaimed Crooke, as the juniors advanced on him. "I—I'll hand the little beast back his tin! Do you think I care for a few bob?"

"Well, I suppose you do, or you wouldn't have taken the trouble to welsh it from a fag. Buck up!"

Crooke snarled, and threw seven shillings on the trunk.

Levison handed out six, following his example.

Two each came from Mellish and Piggott.

"Take up that money, Robinson!"

"I—I don't want—" mumbled the fag.

"Take it up!" thundered Tom Merry, in a voice that made the youthful disciple of Crooke & Co. jump.

The fag slipped the money into his pocket.

"Now listen to me, Robinson. You've been acting like a young blackguard, and if you do it again, you'll get whopped!"

"Ye-es, Merry!"

"Now put them over the boxes. Robinson, take that stump!"

"Ye-es, Merry!"

"Give them six each—well laid on! If you don't lay 'em on hard enough, you'll get some yourself!"

"Ye-es, Merry!"

"Hands off!" roared Crooke fiercely.

Levison of the Fourth made a rush for the door. He was promptly collared by Manners and Herries. The other three were collared with equal promptness. Then the merry blades of the School House were laid face down across the boxes and held there, wriggling and yelling in anticipation.

"Now pile in, Robinson!" said Tom Merry.

"I—I say, Merry, I—I'd rather not!"

"Then we will begin with you!"

"I—I'll do as you tell me!" gasped Robinson.

"Buck up, then!"

Whack, whack, whack, whack, whack, whack! Robinson started with Crooke, and Crooke writhed and roared.

"Oh, you rotters! I'll pay you out for this! Yaroooh! Stop it! Help! Oh crumbs! Oh crikey! Yaroooh!"

"Levison next, kid!"

"If you touch me—" yelled Levison. "Oh crumbs! Keep off! I'll—I'll— Yarooop!"

Levison went through it, yelling.

Then came Mellish's turn. Mellish wriggled and howled and shrieked.

Piggott came last, and he made enough noise for three or four.

Then Tom Merry took the stump.

"That's all right, Robinson! You cut off!"

The fag cut off promptly enough. He had no desire to remain within the reach of Crooke & Co. when Tom Merry and his friends were gone.

Crooke & Co. lay on the boxes groaning. The castigation had been severe, though not so severe as they deserved.

"Justice has been done, deah boys," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "Thank you vewy much for wallyin' wound. I twust, Cwooke, that this will be a lesson to you!"

"Yow-ow-ow!" moaned Crooke.

"You rotters!" howled Levison.

"We're done!" said Tom Merry. "Keep your blackguardism to yourself, Crooke, and you can keep it up till you're found out and sacked from St. Jim's. But don't try that game on with kids in the Second Form again, or you'll hear from us."

"The Great Chief has spoken!" said Monty Lowther solemnly.

"Yow-ow-ow-wow!"

Tom Merry & Co. retired from the scene with a satisfied feeling of having done their duty, and done it well. To Crooke & Co. it seemed that they had done it a little too well. For a considerable time afterwards the only remarks heard in the box-room were:

"Yow-ow-wow! Wow! Grooh! Oh crumbs! Grooogh!"

CHAPTER 3.

The Wreckers!

LEVISON of the Fourth looked out of his study an hour or so later.

Blake & Co. were coming along the passage, heading for Tom Merry's study.



"This w a y, Spike, I leave no fingerprints!"

Half-a-crown has been awarded to T. Churn, Bishop's House, Reynolds Road, Beaconsfield, Bucks.

Arthur Augustus had a roll of manuscript in his hand, and was speaking.

"I wathah think this will take up an extwa column in the 'Weekly,' deah boys! Do you think Lowthah could be persuaded to leave out his comic column for once?"

Blake chuckled.

"You can ask him," he said.

"Yaas, I think I will request him to do so. Aftah all, we are wathah fed-up with Lowthah's little jokes, you know, and if he takes more time ovah them, he may be able to pwoduce some good ones—you nevah can tell!"

Levison scowled at the juniors as they passed.

Study No. 6 was evidently bound for the editorial office to perform their editorial duties on the staff of "Tom Merry's Weekly." They were likely to be engaged for some time. Levison turned back into the study where Percy Mellish was squirming in the armchair, still suffering from the recent infliction in the box-room.

Levison's eyes were gleaming.

"I want you!" he said.

Mellish groaned.

"Oh, lemme alone! I don't feel up to any little game now! Fatheaded idea to skin that young

prig Robinson, too! Your silly idea, wasn't it? Yow-ow!"

"You were keen enough after his cash!" sneered Levison. "Look here! We're going to make those rotters sit up for this!"

"Going to lick Tom Merry?" asked Mellish, with deep sarcasm. "I think I can see you doing it!"

"Not Tom Merry—yet!"

"Taking Blake on?" sneered Mellish. "Don't talk out of your neck, Levison! Blake will mop up the ground with you, and be glad of the chance."

"They've gone to Tom Merry's study, all four of them," said Levison in a low voice. "There's nobody in Study No. 6 now. They'll be busy a long time. They're doing their editing rot! Come on!"

"What for?"

"We're going to rag their study. I'll call Croke to help."

Mellish looked alarmed.

"You silly ass! And what will happen to us if we rag their study? You can jolly well leave me out of this!"

"Nothing will happen to us," said Levison. "I shall work it so that they'll think it's a New House raid and put it down to Figgins. If Blake goes for Figgins, all the better—Figgins could lick him!"

Mellish brightened up. He was as keen to revenge his injuries as Levison was, but he lacked the nerve of the cad of the Fourth.

"Come on!" repeated Levison impatiently.

And Mellish rose, groaning, and followed him from the study.

The two Fourth Formers called for Croke in the Shell passage.

Gerald Croke was tramping about his study, muttering and mumbling. He wasn't feeling inclined to sit down. He scowled at his two precious comrades as they entered.

His scowl relaxed, however, as Levison explained his idea.

"Good wheeze!" he said. "Sure they're safe, though?"

"They're editing in Tom Merry's study."

"Good!" said Croke. "Let's get to work."

The three young rascals hurried along to Study No. 6. That famous apartment was empty, and Blake, Herries, Digby, and D'Arcy were deep in editorial duties, little dreaming of the danger that threatened their quarters.

"This isn't simply a rag," said Levison, as he closed the door and locked it. "We're going to make a real wreck of the study. Don't make too much row, but smash everything. The chaps in the next study are out; I've looked. Here goes for a beginning."

Crash!

Levison took the clock from the mantelpiece and hurled it into the grate.

It was smashed into a score of pieces.

Mellish gave a jump.

"Levison, you ass, that's too thick!"

"Rot! We're going to wreck the place. We can put it all on the New House fellows. It isn't a rag—it's revenge!" said Levison between his teeth. "I won't leave two rags sticking together in the room!"

"Pile in!" said Croke, his eyes glistening. "So long as they don't bowl us out it's all right."

Levison piled in, ably seconded by Croke, and Mellish, though hesitatingly, followed suit.

The time had been well chosen. Nearly all the

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studies in the passage were deserted, and Blake & Co. were distant, and busily occupied. And the work was quick—and very effective.

Crash went the looking-glass under a blow from the poker, and crash went the glass in the bookcase under another blow. The curtains were torn down from the window and ripped into rags. The study cupboard was turned out next—every article of crockery sedulously broken into several pieces and piled in the grate. The fender was bent and twisted out of all shape and broken wherever it would break. The poker was bent, the tongs broken into two, and the shovel twisted out of all resemblance to a shovel.

Mellish looked on almost in terror. If such wanton destruction had come to the knowledge of the Housemaster the destroyers would have been flogged in Hall. There was no doubt about that.

"I—I say, it—it's too thick!" stammered Mellish.

"Rats!" said Levison.

He turned the table over.

"Take the legs, Croke."

"What-ho!" chuckled Croke.

The legs were wrenched off the study table.

Levison turned out Blake's tool-chest and selected a saw.

With perfect coolness he proceeded to saw across the table-top.

"I—I'm not going to have a hand in this!" gasped Mellish. "It means a flogging if it comes out—or the sack, you silly idiots!"

"Get out, then, you funk, and hold your tongue!" snapped Levison.

Mellish unlocked the door and scuttled away. He was glad enough for destruction to fall upon Study No. 6, but he was terrified at the recklessness of the wreckers.

Croke relocked the door after him. Croke's eyes were blazing. He was as reckless as Levison now.

"My hat, this is ripping!" he said. "Get that table-top into three pieces, Levison. There is a tenon saw here. I'll saw up the legs."

"Good man!" grinned Levison.

For ten minutes nothing was heard in the study but the grinding of the saws. By that time the table-top was in three separate pieces, and each of the legs had been sawn in half.

Croke and Levison grinned delightedly at the pile of ruins. But they were not finished yet.

"The chairs!" said Levison.

"What-ho! The chairs!" chortled Croke.

There were five chairs in the study—one each for the occupants, and one with a damaged leg for visitors.

In a few minutes all five of them were damaged seriously. The legs were torn off with powerful wrenches, the rails broken under feet, and the backs dislocated. Then the armchair was taken in hand. All four legs were sawn off, as they were too strong for breaking, and Levison ripped the seat into rags with the study carving-knife and wrenched out the stuffing, and then snapped the knife short under his heel.

Books and papers were slashed and torn; the stamp-covered jamjars on the mantelpiece, which served as vases, were broken; the carpet was dragged up and slashed into a dozen pieces; the screen was reduced to tatters; the curtain-poles sawn into three pieces.

Arthur Augustus' special hat-box was squashed, and the silk topper it contained jumped upon. A box of handsome neckties belonging to the swell of St. Jim's was turned into the grate, and Blake's

cycle oil can poured over them and a match applied.

Levison, looked round the study with a grin of savage satisfaction.

Study No. 6 looked as if a cyclone had struck it—or worse.

Crooke was beginning to feel uneasy.

"My hat, if they should spot us after this!" he breathed.

"They won't!" grinned Levison.

He dipped his finger into the inkpot and daubed on the wall in large capital letters:

"SCHOOL HOUSE CADS, GO AND EAT COKE!"

"FIGGINS."

Crooke chuckled.

"That's plain enough," he grinned. "They'll be so ratty they won't stop to ask Figgins many questions before they hammer him. Let's get off!"

Crooke stepped towards the door. Then he paused, the colour wavering in his cheeks.

There was a hasty step in the passage.

Then the door-handle was seized and turned from outside.

Crooke and Levison stood rooted to the floor in the midst of the wreck they had made. They had finished their dastardly work, and escape was cut off from the study they had wrecked.

CHAPTER 4.

Editing Under Difficulties!

LITTLE dreaming of what was happening in Study No. 6, the schoolboy editors were hard at work in Tom Merry's study.

Seven cheery juniors sat round the table,

with pens in their hands, ink on their fingers, and thoughtful expressions on their faces.

The smile upon Monty Lowther's face indicated that the comic column was even more comical than usual, and occasionally he broke into chuckles.

Blake, who was doing a story, looked up rather morosely, as an unusually loud cackinnation escaped the humorist of the Shell.

"Something especially good from 'Funny Bits'?" he asked.

"You silly ass!" said Lowther witheringly. "There's never been anything like this, even in 'Funny Bits.' I'll read it out."

"Oh, don't!" said Blake hastily. "Sorry I spoke!"

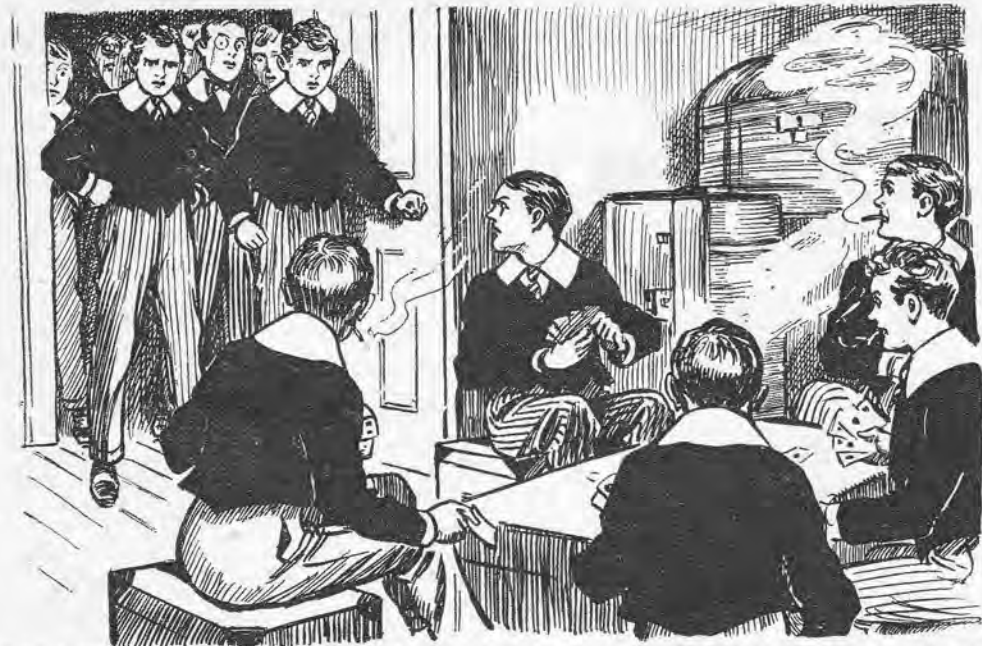
"There's something about you chaps in it," said Lowther. "I'd better read it out. You'll see whether it's like 'Funny Bits.'"

"Oh, I don't say all your jokes are from 'Funny Bits!'" said Blake considerably. "I was referring to the good ones."

"This is a new version of the 'Ten Little Nigger Boys,'" said Lowther, unheeding. "Lend me your ears!"

"'Ten little nigger boys walking in a line,
One saw Gussy's face, and then there were nine!'"

"You uttah ass!" ejaculated Arthur Augustus, turning his eyeglass witheringly upon the humorist. "I wegard that as uttably wotten! Personal jokes are in vewy bad taste, Lowthah, and I insist—"



Tom Merry kicked open the door of the box-room, and there was an angry exclamation as the seven juniors crowded in. "What do you fellows want?" growled Crooke. "Wush the wottahs!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus.

"Nine little nigger boys, sitting on a gate,
Herries played his cornet, and then there
were eight!"

"You thundering chump!" said Herries.
"Why should there be only eight after I'd
played my cornet?"

"That one had a musical ear," explained
Lowther.

"Why, you silly fathead—"

"Eight little nigger boys, sailing on Loch
Leven,
One ate a haggis, and then there were
seven."

"That's put in specially for Kerr," said
Lowther. "I don't know what a haggis is, but
I know Kerr gets waxy when you ask him if
it's fatal."

"Seven little nigger boys watched behind
the sticks,
One saw Blake get a goal, and then there
were six!"

Jack Blake rose to his feet.

"And why?" he asked, his hand resting on
the inkpot.

"Shock to the system—sudden, surprising
occurrence, you know," said Monty Lowther.
"Yaroooh! Stoppim!"

Tom Merry caught the inkpot, and jerked it
downward.

"Peace, peace, my children!" said the captain
of the Shell chidingly.

"Look here—" roared Blake.

"Let's hear the rest and get it over," said

Digby. "Lowther won't leave off until he's
finished."

Monty Lowther went on with his new version
of an ancient rhyme:

"Six little nigger boys, very much alive,
One heard Gussy sing, and then there were
five!"

"Weally, Lowthah, if you persist in these
wotten pwactical jokes, I warn you that you
are askin' for a feahful thwashin'!"

"Five little nigger boys met a fearful bore,
Who talked about cameras, and then there
were four!"

"Why, you silly cuckoo!" said Manners, in
measured tones. "Of all the idiotic piffle you
ever perpetrated, that takes the biscuit! What
the fellows can see to grin at in it, beats me!"

"Four little nigger boys came along to tea,
One ate what Dig cooked, and then there
were three!"

Digby glowered wrathfully at the humorist of
the Shell. Dig had lately tried his hand at
cake-making. This was evidently a topical
allusion.

"Three little nigger boys read the 'Weekly'
through,
One read Merry's article, and then there
were two!"

"That's about enough," said Tom Merry.
"That utter rot can't go into the 'Weekly.'
We've got to keep up a certain standard of
quality."

"Two little nigger boys—" went on
Lowther, unheeding.

"Rats!"

"Chuck it!"

"Never mind the two little nigger boys," said
Blake. "We've had enough little nigger boys.
That piffle can't go in the 'Weekly.'"

"Look here, you ass—"

"Hands up for blue pencilling Lowther's rot,"
said Blake, looking round.

Every hand but Monty Lowther's went up.

"You silly chumps, you can't see good jokes.
A chap ought to be able to take a joke against
himself."

"Then I'll suggest a wind-up for the giddy
poem," said Tom Merry.

"Two little nigger boys read Lowther's
comic rot,
Both laid down and died on the spot!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Monty Lowther snorted.

"I'd rather leave the poem out than finish it
with piffle like that," he said.

"Wats! Tom Mewwy's lines are the best of
the lot."

"Fathead!"

"I wefuse to be called a fathead, Lowthah!"

"Look here, I'll revise it, and put in New
House names," said Lowther. "After, all, it's
as surprising for Figgins to get a goal as for
Blake—"

"Look here—" roared Blake.

"Unless Herries was in goal, I mean, of
course," said Lowther. "If Herries was between

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BUFFALO BILL

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the posts, there would be nothing surprising in it.

"Well, that's so, considering the way Figgins scored last time," remarked Manners. "I must really say—"

"Shush!" roared Tom Merry. "Don't begin a football argument; we're editing now. Cheese it!"

"That goal was due to Manners going to sleep at back!" bellowed Herries.

"Asleep!" exclaimed Manners indignantly. "I like that! Why, you were dozing between the sticks! I distinctly heard you snore!"

That statement was too much for Herries. He whirled round the table, and grasped his fellow-editor by the neck.

Manners came over the back of his chair like a sack of coke.

"Heard me snore, did you?" howled Herries. "Well, now we'll hear you roar."

"Yaroooh! Leggo! Why, I'll—"
Bump! Crash!

The table rocked as Herries and Manners crashed into it, struggling furiously. There was a terrific yell from Arthur Augustus D'Arcy as the inkpot rolled off on his knees.

"Gweat Scott! Oh deah! My twousahs! Look at my twousahs!"

"Order!" yelled Tom Merry.

"Take that, you cheeky Shellfish! Snoring, was I?"

"Yes, you were. Fast asleep, and snoring like a grampus!" roared Manners. "Take that, you cheeky fag! Snoring, I say—snoring, snoring!"

"Drag 'em apart!" yelled Tom Merry.

"Pooh! Let Herries lick him!" said Blake. "He wants licking. And I'm ready to lick anybody who says the goal wasn't due to Shell fatheaded bungling!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Eh? Herries is getting licked, you duffer!" "Rats! Herries could lick anybody in the Shell. As for that goal—"

"Snoring!" roared Manners. "Yes, snoring in goal!"

"You cheeky worm!"

"Hewwies was not snawin'. Tom Mewwy was goin' to sleep on the gground—"

"Why, you ass—"

"And Lowthah was playin' the giddy ox—"

"And what were you doing?" hooted Lowther.

"Stopping to smooth your hair?"

"Nothin' of the sort! I wegard you as a silly ass—"

"Fathead!"

"Now, then," roared Herries, as he crashed down on the floor on top of Manners, "was I snoring?"

"Yes, you were!" roared Manners defiantly. "Snoring like billy-ho! You could have been heard from here to Rylcombe!"

Bang!

Manners' head collided with the floor, and he bellowed.

Lowther grasped Herries to drag him off, and Blake immediately grasped Lowther.

Tom Merry rushed to the rescue, and was promptly collared by Digby. In a moment more, six juniors were mixed up on the floor, amid contributions for the "Weekly" overturned chairs, and inkpot, pens, and blotting-paper, and other articles.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy looked on. Fairplay was a jewel, and D'Arcy remained a spectator. He was also fully occupied with the ruinous state of his trousers.



"I see Angus has finally got his scooter. He's been saving coupons ever since he was five years old!"

Half-a-crown has been awarded to M. Koster, 21, Nairno Grove, Sunray Avenue, Herve Hill, London, S.E.24.

"What the merry thunder's the row?" exclaimed a voice at the door, and the handsome face of Talbot of the Shell looked in, with an expression of great astonishment.

"We are editin' the papah, deah boy."

"It looks like it," grinned Talbot. "You'll have the Housemaster here to help you edit, if you don't chuck that awful row!"

"Yah! Shell rotters! Go for 'em!"

"Cheeky fags! Kick 'em out!"

"For goodness' sake chuck it!" exclaimed Talbot. "I tell you, you'll have the Housemaster here. What's the row about?"

The combatants separated at last, very dusty and dishevelled and damaged.

Editing was over for that afternoon.

Blake & Co. shook the dust of Tom Merry's study from their feet; but they carried away a good deal of dust on their clothes.

Manners had the last word; he yelled "Snoring!" as the Fourth Formers departed. But, fortunately, Talbot slammed the door at the same moment, and Herries did not hear.

CHAPTER 5.

An Alibi Required!

"WHAT the merry dickens is the matter with this door?"

Jack Blake shook the door of Study No. 6 angrily.

He was feeling a little cross already. That afternoon's editing was to have produced the finished copy for the "Weekly," but owing to the "Ten Little Nigger Boys" and the football argument, most of the work had to be done over again. And the chums of the Fourth were feeling very dusty and rumpled and wrathful.

It was the last straw to find their own study door fastened against them.

Blake shook the handle angrily, and kicked on the lower panels.

"Pway, what's the mattab, deah boy?"

"Some silly ass has locked us out of the study!" hooted Blake. "Here, let us in, you fatheads! Open this blessed door!"

Kick, kick, kick!

Within the study Crooke was looking quite ghastly, and Levison's brow was wrinkled. The wrecking had been done, the notice daubed on the wall to give the chums a false impression, but at the last moment retreat was cut off.

Crooke fairly shivered as he looked round at the wreck. If Blake & Co. found the perpetrators red-handed, so to speak, their vengeance would be something terrific.

Crooke turned a scared look at his accomplice.

Kick, kick, kick! Bang, bang!

"I—I say—" muttered Crooke.

Levison made him a quick sign to be silent.

"Not a word!" he whispered. "Not a syllable!"

They don't know it's us. There's the window."

Crooke glanced at the window, and shuddered.

Blake had climbed down the ivy to the quad more than once, but the cad of the Shell did not possess Blake's nerve.

"I—I can't!" he murmured.

Levison shrugged his shoulders.

"They'll get the door open soon. Then—"

"Oh, you rotter, to get me into this!" groaned Crooke.

Levison gave him a look of fierce contempt, and crossed to the window. Cautiously, with hardly a sound, he opened it.

Crooke followed him, with dragging steps. The risk of the descent was better than falling into the hands of Blake & Co. when they discovered what had been done to their quarters.

"Will you let us in?" bawled Blake through the keyhole.

"Yaas, wathah, you uttah wottahs! It's some pwaetical jokin' beast! Open the door at once, you silly duffahs!"

"It's all right, Figgins," said Levison, just loudly enough to be heard in the passage. "They can't get in."

Crooke caught at the idea at once.

"Let 'em knock, Kerr," he said.

"Figgins & Co.!" shouted Blake, catching the words. "Those New House bounders! It's a raid! We'll raid 'em!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Let us in, you New House rotters!" roared Blake, shaking the door-handle. "What are you up to in our study?"

Levison grinned, and climbed cautiously out of the window. He had plenty of nerve, but his companion watched him nervously.

Crooke was a little reassured, however, by the ease with which Ernest Levison swung himself down the ivy.

Levison dropped on the ground. It was already growing dusk in the quadrangle, and there was not much danger of being observed.

The cad of the Fourth looked up at Crooke's white face in the window. Then he shrugged his shoulders, and walked away. If the Shell fellow did not choose to follow where he had led, that was his own look-out.

"Get a chisel from somewhere!" Blake's voice could be heard in the passage. "We'll have this open jolly soon, and we'll snatch the rotters bald-headed!"

That was enough for Crooke. He squeezed himself desperately through the window, and clutched on the ivy. Not daring to look below, he swung himself down by the thick tendrils. It was not so difficult as it looked. But Crooke was out of condition, and he was panting and gasping, and his arms were aching by the time he set his feet on the ground.

He did not linger there. He scuttled off at once, and disappeared across the dusky quadrangle.

Levison was waiting for him under the elms. He caught Crooke by the arm, and stopped him in the shadow of the trees.

"So you did it?" he sneered.

"Yes," panted Crooke; "I did it! I could do it as well as you could, I suppose? I—I say, we went a bit too far. There'll be an awful row about this. It might mean the sack if the Head heard about it!"

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"Rather too late to think of that!" said Levison, with a sneer. "We're safe enough. They'll think it was the New House fellows."

"But they'll find out it wasn't."

"Perhaps. Then we've got to prove an alibi." Levison looked at his watch. "It's just six. Now, where were we between five and six?"

"In Blake's study, of course."

"Idiot! I mean, where can we prove we were when they start making inquiries?" growled Levison.

"Oh, I see!"

Levison thought hard. He understood, even more than Crooke did, the deadly seriousness of what had been done. The first wrath of the School House chums would be turned upon Figgins & Co. But suppose Figgins & Co. succeed in proving their innocence? Then indubitably it would be guessed that the wrecking of Study No. 6 was revenge for the licking in the box-room.

Levison's eyes brightened suddenly.

"I've got it!" he muttered.

"What's the wheeze?"

"Young Piggott."

"What's the good?"

"Come with me, and don't jaw!" muttered Levison. "Piggott's in the tuckshop. It's all serene."

Crooke followed the cad of the Fourth as he hurried towards the tuckshop. Piggott of the Third was coming out, with a parcel under his arm. He looked at the two juniors and grinned.

"Nothing doing!" he said at once.

"What do you mean, confound you?" growled Crooke.

"This grub is for Knox," said Piggott. "I'm having tea in Hall."

"Never mind Knox, and never mind tea," said Levison. "You've got to help us, Piggott. You're a cunning little beast, and you can do it. We've wrecked Study No. 6, to pay those cads out for meddling with us this afternoon."

"Good for you!" said the Third Former. "Why didn't you ask me to take a hand? I'd have done it."

"We've done it pretty thoroughly," said Levison. "We haven't left two rags holding together."

"Phew! There'll be a row!"

"That's where you come in. We want you to prove an alibi—and you're the chap to prove it. Crooke will stand you a spread in the study afterwards."

"I'm on!" said Piggott, at once. "But they won't believe what I say. They know I'm thick with you."

"You're going to quarrel with us."

"Eh?"

"And ask Tom Merry to interfere."

"My hat!"

"You'll appeal to him to make us give you back some money we've won from you, playing in the box-room."

"Oh crumbs!"

"Ten bob each," said Levison. "We've been playing with you there—between five and six. See?"

"Merry will be down on us. We'll make a fuss, and hand you the money. You will hand it back to us afterwards, of course!"

Piggott nodded; but his eyes gleamed curiously for a moment.

"Then when they come to inquire where we were at the time, it's all cut and dried—we were in the box-room, playing cards. You savvy, Piggott?"

"I'm on," said Piggott. "I'll get this to Knox, and then spin my yarn to Tom Merry. Rely on me."

And Piggott cut off, grinning. "That will work," said Levison. "What do you think, Croke?"

"Right as rain!" grinned Croke. "And when they know for certain it wasn't us, they'll think it was the New House bounders, whatever they say. It may lead to a regular split."

"All the better."

"What-ho!" said Croke, heartily. And in his exuberance of spirits at this pleasant prospect, Croke marched his worthy comrade into the tuckshop and stood him a ginger-pop.

CHAPTER 6.

Baffled Wrath!

CREAK!

Crack!

The door was giving.

Blake & Co. were taking drastic measures. The door of their study was locked against them, and they had no doubt whatever that Figgins & Co. of the New House were within. That it was a raid seemed clear, and they were anxious to catch the New House raiders in the act. It was tea-time, too, and they knew that if Fatty Wynn was in the study there wouldn't be much left in the cupboard for tea.

Crack! Crack!

Groan!

Blake had jammed in the chisel between the lock and the doorpost. He forced it back hard. The lock was not designed to stand that kind of pressure. It gave way under the strain.

"It's going, deah boys!"

"Stick together, in case they make a rush!" said Blake. "Don't let any of the rotters get through!"

"We're going to make an example of them."

"Yaas, wathah!"

With a final groan, the door parted.

Blake strode in at the doorway, his chums lining up behind him, to cut off the escape of the enemy.

But there was no enemy. The study was deserted. And the state of the study struck upon the eyes of the Fourth Formers like a blow.

Blake could not speak for some moments.

He gazed at the scene of destruction speechlessly. It simply took his breath away.

"Great Scott!" he gasped at last.

"The rotters!" howled Herries.

"The cads!" roared Digby.

"Bai Jove, the beasts!"

Blake looked round him, hardly able to believe his eyes. Everything that could be broken was broken; what could not be broken was sawn in pieces. Hardly an article remained whole. The study needed refurnishing throughout, to the last article. And as the juniors furnished the study themselves, out of their own pockets, the bill was likely to be a serious one.

"They're gone!" said Blake, between his teeth. He nodded towards the open window. "They cleared out of the window while we were getting the door open. We'll make them pay for this!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Look at the armchair!" said Dig, almost tearfully. "The armchair my aunt sent us!"

"Look at my neckties!" shrieked Arthur Augustus, gazing in horror at the smouldering mass in the grate.

(Continued on next page.)

LAUGH THESE OFF!

—with Monty Lowther.



HALLO, EVERYBODY!

Misprint from the "Wayland Gazette": "Mr. Linton's appearance on the stage as secretary of the charity concert was greeted with an outburst of cheeping." Better than getting the whole bird, anyway!

American newspapers report that a famous tenor has the adulation of millions, yet maintains his balance. Pursuing the even tenor of his way?

A writer states that a game resembling golf was played in Greece hundreds of years ago. Now we know what Mr. Ratscliff was doing with a club on the Wayland Golf Course!

By the way, is to-day your birthday? If so, many happy returns.

The "cheapest ever" car is sure to come, says a motoring writer. But will it go?

News: A burglar caught in Wayland was sentenced to five years for a safe robbery. Proving that it wasn't so safe after all.

"Your sore throat seems worse, Gore," said Skimpole. "Yes, I've been telling so many people about it," said Gore.

Then there was the engine driver who used to get out at tunnels and walk round to meet his fireman and the train at the other end, because he was frightened of the dark.

"Sioux Chief takes University Degree." A well-Red Indian.

"Be a Live Wire," says an advertisement. And give your chums a shock?

News: Wayland is to have buses with a new type of bell. Tings to come.

The strength of insects compared with their size is prodigious, states a scientist. Even a mosquito can raise quite a large lump. Ow!

Hear about the actor who refused to go to South Africa? He heard that the ostrich sometimes lays an egg weighing four pounds.

"Boom in Radio Sets," reads a headline. Have they ever tried regulating the volume?

All the best, chums!

"Look at the fender—the glass—the bookcase!" said Blake, in a helpless rage.

"Look here, the Housemaster ought to see this!" shouted Herries. "This isn't a jape—this is rotten blackguardism—"

"Look at the inscription, too!" said Blake. "'School House cads! Go and eat coke!—Figgins.' He wasn't ashamed to put his name to it!"

"The disgustin' cad! Look at my toppah—squashed!"

"Everything smashed up!" said Blake. "Well, we won't let the Housemaster see it if we can help it. But we'll make Figgins & Co. sorry for this. I never dreamed they could be such utter cads as this."

"If we hadn't heard them talking, I shouldn't believe they'd have done it," said Dig. "But we heard 'em!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Come on!" said Blake, his eyes glinting. "We're going over to the New House. We'll serve their study the same, and smash them into the bargain!"

"Yes, come on!" said Herries. "I know I won't leave a thing standing in their rotten study, the cads!"

The four chums rushed down the passage.

They wanted vengeance, and they wanted it at once—and they wanted it hot and strong! Venturing into the enemy's quarters was risky, but the risk did not matter to them now. They only thought of getting to close quarters with Figgins & Co., and visiting dire punishment upon their devoted heads.

They fairly flew across the dusky quadrangle.

A light was burning in the window of Figgins' study, showing that the New House Co. were at home. Doubtless they were chuckling over the raid.

Blake & Co., with set, savage faces, dashed into the New House and rushed across the Hall. Even Arthur Augustus had forgotten that there was ink on his trousers. With gleaming eyes and clenched fists they rushed on—and nearly rushed into Monteith of the Sixth, who was coming along the lower passage. One glance at them was enough for the prefect, and he barred their way.

"Stop!" he rapped out.

"Let us pass!" said Blake furiously.

"Stop!" repeated Monteith. "Have you got the nerve to come over here for a House row—"

"Let us pass, I tell you!" roared Herries.

"We're going to see Figgins!"

"You're jolly well not—"

"Geevout of the way, you New House boundah!"

"What?"

"Shove him out of the way!" shouted Herries.

"He's only a New House rotter, anyway!"

"What's that?" said a sharp voice, and Kildare came out of Monteith's study. "You young rascals! Are you cheeking Monteith?"

Blake & Co. paused. They were so excited that they nearly charged the New House prefect and walked over him. But Kildare was their own prefect—head prefect of the School House and captain of St. Jim's.

"You cheeky young sweeps!" said Kildare sternly. "How dare you speak to Monteith like that! Go back to your own House at once, and take two hundred lines each!"

"Weally, Kildare—"

"And if you're more than three seconds going,

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I'll borrow a cane of Monteith, and give you a thumping licking all round."

"Bai Jove!"

Several juniors gathered round, surprised by the scene, and Figgins of the Fourth looked down from the landing.

"There's the rotter!" shouted Herries.

Figgins jumped.

"Hallo! Whom are you calling a rotter?" he demanded.

"You, you cad!" howled Blake. "And if you weren't skulking behind prefects, we'd wipe the floor with you!"

"I'll jolly well soon show you whether I'm skulking behind prefects!" yelled Figgins wrathfully, as he bounded down the stairs.

Monteith caught him by the collar as he reached Blake & Co., and swung him back.

"Go to your study at once, Figgins, and stay there!"

"Look here, Monteith—"

"And take a hundred lines!" snapped Monteith.

Figgins grunted and went upstairs to his study. The School House four looked after him with burning eyes. But two prefects were in the way.

"I gave you three seconds!" said Kildare grimly. "May I ask you to lend me a cane, Monteith? It's needed, I think."

"I think it is, rather!" said Monteith, and he went to his study.

"I—I say, we're going!" stammered Blake.

"Yaas, wathah! We have no desiah whatever to wemain in this wotten House!"

"You'll wait another minute or two now," said Kildare. "You can't cheek prefects, my infants—especially a New House prefect in his own House. You seem to have forgotten your manners. What did you come here for?"

"To—to see Figgins."

"To row with him, I suppose?"

"Well, ye—es!"

"You cheeky young rascals!"

"You don't know what he's done!" howled Herries.

"Well, what has he done?"

"Shut up, Herries!"

Herries bit his lip. He had no intention of "sneaking."

"Well?" said Kildare.

"N—nothing!" stammered Herries.

"One of your usual House rows, I suppose," said Kildare. "But there's a limit, you know. You've insulted Monteith."

"Yaas, but—"

"Thanks, old chap!" Kildare took the cane from the New House prefect. "Now, hold out your hands. You first, Blake!"

Swish!

"Now, Herries!"

Swish!

"D'Arcy—"

"Weally, Kildare—"

"Hold out your hand!"

Swish!

"Oh, cwikey!"

"Now you, Digby!"

Swish!

"Now clear off, and let me have the lines to-morrow, or they'll be doubled. I'm ashamed of you. Get out!"

The four juniors stumbled out of the New House with feelings too deep for words. Vengeance upon Figgins & Co., evidently had to be postponed.



With the Terrible Three sitting on them, Figgins & Co. were helpless. "Now we're going to your study, Figgins, to smash every blessed thing there, same as you did to our study yesterday!" said Blake. "Then we're going to lick you till you can't crawl, see?"

CHAPTER 7.

Profit for Piggott!

"CAN I speak to you, Tom Merry?"

The Terrible Three, in no very good humour, had been putting their study to rights, and sorting out the "copy" for the "Weekly."

The unfortunate ending of the afternoon's editing had made them a little cross.

Tom Merry did not look very genial as Piggott of the Third came in. He did not like Piggott, Fag of the Third as he was, Piggott was a thorough-going young scamp, and he was employed on all kinds of shady errands by older fellows like Cutts and St. Leger of the Fifth, and Knox of the Sixth, and he had thus an insight into a way of life that was decidedly bad for him.

Tom did not like the unscrupulous young rascal. But he melted a bit as he saw that Piggott was "blubbing." At all events, Piggott was screwing his grubby knuckles into his eyes, and his eyes looked very red.

"Well, what's the matter, kid?" asked Tom, not unkindly.

"C—can I speak to you?"

"Of course you can. Wire in!"

"I—I've lost m—my money!" mumbled Piggott. "As you're captain of the Shell, you ought to interfere."

"You've been gambling again?" growled Tom.

"Please I didn't want to!" said Piggott eagerly.

"After—after what happened in the box-room, I—I told Levison and Crooke I wouldn't play any more."

"Well, that was sensible!"

"I meant it, too. But—but they made me go into the box-room and—and play!" whined Piggott. "I didn't want to—I tell you. I didn't. But they kept me there nearly an hour, up to five

minutes ago, and—and they've won my money. I told them I didn't want to play, but they made me because you made them give young Robinson his money back."

Tom Merry's brow darkened.

"My hat! This is getting too thick!" he exclaimed. "I'm beginning to think I ought to let Kildare know about Crooke."

"Let's see him," said Manners. "If Piggott's telling the truth, Crooke ought to be scragged."

"I—I don't want him hurt," said Piggott. "It isn't that. Only I didn't want to play, so they ought to give me my money back, don't you think so?"

"Certainly they ought, and shall, if they've taken it," said Tom Merry. "Where are they now?"

"Levison's with Crooke in his study."

"Come on, you fellows," said Tom. "We'll see into this."

The Terrible Three made their way at once to Crooke's study, followed by Piggott, who was still knocking his eyes. Tom Merry threw Crooke's door open without ceremony and strode in.

Crooke was seated in the armchair, with a cigarette between his lips. Levison was leaning against the mantelpiece. Both of them looked scowlingly at the Terrible Three.

"Well, what do you want?" growled Crooke.

"Have you been swindling young Piggott?" asked Tom Merry, directly.

"I don't choose to answer such a question."

"If young Piggott says—" began Levison.

"He says you got him into the box-room and forced him to play, and won his money," said Tom Merry.

"It's a lie!"

"Awful whopper!" said Crooke.

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"I can prove it!" howled Piggott.

"Go ahead, then," said Tom.

"I've just thought of it. Levison won ten bob from me. I gave him a currency note, and I've got the number."

"Oh, good! Trot it out."

Piggott extracted a sheet of paper from his pocket, upon which a number was written.

"My pater told me always to take numbers," he said. "I always do; it's safer. That currency note was 0468."

"Have you got a note with that number about you, Levison?"

"Find out!"

"We'll find out fast enough," said Tom Merry. "You'll own up, or we shall search you—unless you prefer it to go to the Housemaster."

Levison, with a snarl, snatched a ten-shilling note from his pocket and flung it on the table.

"There's the young rotter's money! I don't want to keep it."

"So you admit it?"

"There's the note," said Levison, sullenly.

"Take your money, Piggott. How much did Crooke win from you?"

"Thirty shillings," said Piggott.

Crooke gave a violent start and fixed a deadly look upon the fag.

"It's a lie," he said thickly. "It—it was ten shillings, same as Levison."

"Yes, ten shillings," said Levison, with a look at Piggott, which the fag did not appear to see.

"Thirty shillings, and that ten—that's two pounds," said Tom Merry. "That's a lot of money for a kid like you, Piggott."

"It was all I had in my money-box," said Piggott, tearfully. "I've been saving up my tips all this term to buy a camera. They made me open my money-box and take it out."

"Well, my hat!" said Manners, with a deep breath.

"It's not true!" yelled Crooke, furiously. "I don't believe the young rotter ever had a money-box at all."

"Cheese it, Crooke!" said Levison, hastily, as he caught a gleam in Piggott's eyes. "Pay up and look pleasant. It will be all the worse for you if you don't pay."

There was a hidden meaning in Levison's words, which had its effect upon Crooke. With a savage exclamation the cad of the Shell took out his wallet and threw a pound note and a ten-shilling note on the table.

"There you are, you swindling little hound!" he snarled.

Piggott gathered up the money.

"Thank you, Tom Merry," he said. "You see, I said they'd deny it, and if I hadn't thought about the number of the note they'd have stuck to it. They kept me in the box-room from soon after five, right up to six o'clock, playing cards, and wouldn't let me get out, though I asked them, and told them I'd tell a prefect."

"You needn't sneak to a prefect, but you can tell me if they do it again," said Tom Merry.

"I'll see there's a stopper put on it."

"Thank you, Merry!"

Piggott scuttled out of the study.

"Now, Crooke," said Tom Merry. "I won't handle you, because you've been licked once this afternoon. But if this happens again, I'll see that you get a dormitory ragging that you won't forget in a hurry. The same to you, Levison."

And the Terrible Three quitted the study.

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Levison and Crooke looked at one another. Crooke was scowling savagely, and Levison grinning.

"That young villain doesn't mean to give us the money back!" said Crooke, in a low voice of intense rage. "He's taken advantage of us."

"Looks like it. Cunning little beast!"

"We fixed it up for ten bob each, money to be returned afterwards, and a spread for that grubby little cad!"

"It was worth what it's cost."

"It hasn't cost you anything!" snarled Crooke. "That ten bob was mine, and he's stuck me for thirty bob, too!"

"Better than what would happen if Blake found us out," said Levison, quietly. "We've done ten or twelve pounds' worth of damage in Study No. 6."

Crooke's brow cleared a little. He did not like parting with two pounds, and it was borne in upon his mind very clearly that Piggott intended to keep the money. He was playing with fire in dealing with the rascal of the Third, but in the extensive damage done to Study No. 6, and security from discovery, there was comfort.

CHAPTER 8.

Dismal Quarters!

"HALLO! Not ratty, surely?"

Monty Lowther asked that question cheerily as Blake & Co. came into the Common-room in the School House.

The Fourth Formers were looking moody and furious.

"Don't keep it up like that," said Tom Merry, in some surprise. "Bless your little hearts, we've often had a scrap in the study before."

"Oh, don't rot!" growled Blake. "Have you seen our study, and what those New House villains have done to it?"

"Sure, I've seen it!" said Reilly of the Fourth. "It's basty! I'd make 'em pay for the damage—every shilling!"

"We went over to scrag them, and ran into Kildare!" growled Digby. "I suppose it will keep till to-morrow. The rotten cads—"

"Oh, draw it mild, if you're talking of Figgins & Co.!" said Tom Merry. "They're cheeky bounders, but nothing of that sort!"

"Come and see what they've done!" growled Blake.

A crowd of fellows followed Blake to Study No. 6. There were exclamations of wrath and indignation when he switched on the light, and the scene of havoc was displayed.

The School House juniors could scarcely believe their eyes. No House "rag" had ever been carried out to anything like that extent before.

"Figgins couldn't have done that!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "He wouldn't be such an awful rotter!"

"Look what's written on the wall!" hooted Digby.

"Anyone might have written that."

"We heard them talking in the study before they skulked out of the window."

"Oh, that alters the case, of course!"

"Yaas, wathah! And that wottah Monteith stopped us frowm scwaggin' them, and that duffah Kildare caned us for makin' a wov in the New House!"

"What awful cads!" said Lowther. "We shall have to make them sit up for this. We'll all take a hand and muck up their quarters in the



WINTER SPORTS ON YOUR STAMPS

Enjoy by the fireside with your stamp album all the fun and thrills of sport on snow and ice!

Issued by the U.S.A. to commemorate the Olympic Winter Games at Lake Placid in 1932, this 2 cent stamp shows a ski-jumper in mid-air

WHIO doesn't enjoy skating? It's one of winter's few compensations. If, how-

ever, the weather or some other reason prevents you getting in a bit of skating or tobogganing, you can do the next best thing—see it being done by experts in the stamp-album.

Thanks to the enterprise of such countries as U.S.A., Germany, Austria, France, and Russia, we can get a very good idea not only of skating, but of most other winter sports.

"SKATING" STAMPS.

For skating, we first turn to Hungary, whose 300 korona stamp, issued in 1925, shows a man figure skating. Less spectacular, but quite as interesting is the skater on the six pfennig specimen of Germany, issued in connection with the Garmisch Olympic games of 1935. His skates, you'll notice, are different in shape from the Hungarian's, whose skate toes are turned upwards and have saw-like edges. These serrations grip the ice when a figure-skater is "displaying" on his toes.

The skater on the German stamp is obviously racing, for his skates are of the long, tapered kind, which permit their wearer to get up immense speed on the ice.

Various aspects of skiing are well represented on stamps. On the 200 korona value of the same Hungarian series as the "skater" stamp already mentioned, we see a ski-or helping himself along by means of the odd-shaped sticks most skiers use. They not only help you keep your balance, but enable you to climb uphill, as well as glide along the straight.

The most thrilling ski-ing is seen in ski-jumping, and for this you certainly need to be an expert. U.S.A., Germany, and France have all issued stamps showing this type of ski-ing. The

usual procedure is for the competitor to jump from a platform built on some hillside, down on to the snowdrifts below. Often this is accomplished at a speed of fifty miles an hour.

Our French stamp illustration gives us a good idea of what the world below looks like to the ski-er as he sails—or should we say flies?—earthwards from his platform.

SLALOM RACING.

Another speciality of ski-ing is slalom racing—as much a test of speed as being able to control yourself on skis. After hurtling downhill, the competitor has to race between pairs of flags in such a way that his two feet must pass together

over an imaginary line drawn between two flags.

To commemorate the International Ski Championship, Austria issued a series of beautiful stamps in 1936, all devoted to slalom racing. The twelve and thirty-five



He flies through the air with the greatest of ease! A ski-jumper on the 1½ franc French stamp of 1937.

groschen values depict slalom races, but, obviously for the sake of appearances, one of the pair of obstacle flags has been omitted in both cases.

Next to ski-ing in popularity, and by no means less thrilling, is bob-sleighing, shown on the twenty-five pfennig German stamp of 1935. Those who enjoy this sport have to thank an ingenious visitor to St. Moritz, who produced the first bob-sleigh by joining up two small sleighs by means of a plank of wood.

"Yaas, wathah! But what's going to be done?"

"Get all this rubbish stacked away in the box-room this evening and out of sight," said Tom.

"That's easy enough, I suppose," said Blake. "But what about furnishing the study? There's not a thing here can be used again. If the maid finds the study empty in the morning she's certain to jaw."

"Contributions," said Tom. "You'll have to get the study furnished again some time, but until then we'll all lend something. There's a gammy old table in the box-room you can have, and we'll all contribute some chairs, and we can stick up some shelves for the books, and we'll all whack out crockery and things. You can tell the maid you've had some alterations. And, by Jove, you have, you know!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

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same way. There'd be a frightful row if the Head saw this!"

"Serve them right to let him see it!" grunted Blake. "We're not going to, all the same."

"The maid will jaw when she sees it in the morning," said Digby.

"And the House dame will be brought to look at it," said Reilly. "Faith, ye can't keep it dark intirely! Mrs. Mimms will tell Railton."

"Blessed if I know what's to be done about it!" said Blake. "If it comes out, the New House cads will say we've sneaked. But it's a bit thick to have to cover up their dashed hooliganism for them."

"Better do it, all the same," said Tom Merry. "It's a dirty trick, but we don't want the masters to take a hand in it. We can take care of ourselves, and give the New House as good as they send."

"I suppose that's all right," said Blake. "Any fellow who wants a job can lend us a hand carting away these crocks!"

"Sure, we'll all help, Blake darling!"

"Many hands make light work," said Monty Lowther. "Pile in, and just imagine you're the broker's man."

A crowd of fellows lent a willing hand. The Terrible Three, and Talbot and Kangaroo, and Dane and Glyn, and Gore and Skimpole, joined in, as well as Reilly, Kerruish, Julian, and several more of the Fourth.

The wreckage was carried away in instalments, as it were, to the upper box-room and stacked away.

Study No. 6 was stripped bare at last, even to the carpet and the curtains.

Blake & Co. looked round the empty room desolately enough.

"Looks cheery, doesn't it?" said Blake.

"Howwid, deah boy! But we'll make those wottahs sowwy for it!"

Tom Merry & Co. were bringing in contributions of furniture. The "gammy" table from the box-room was better than nothing, though it rocked when it was touched. An ancient, discarded pair of curtains from Kerruish's study at least covered the window, if they did not adorn it. Four chairs, all more or less rocky, were lent by other fellows, and a shelf was provided for the books. As for D'Arcy's topper and neckties, they were irreplaceable.

In dismal quarters the four chums sat down at last to do their preparation. But they were thinking less of preparation than of the dire vengeance that was to fall upon Figgins & Co. on the morrow.

CHAPTER 9.

Figgins is Wrathful!

SEVEN juniors in the School House jumped out of bed at the first clang of the rising-bell in the morning.

They were Blake & Co. in the Fourth Form dormitory and the Terrible Three in the Shell.

The seven were down before any of the other fellows.

They were aware that Figgins & Co. were early risers, and they were anxious to "stalk" them. If they had an opportunity of coming to close quarters with Figgins & Co. before "brekker," that opportunity was not to be lost.

Luck favoured the avengers. As they came out of the School House into the misty quadrangle, three figures could be seen sprinting round the quad with their scarves flying behind them. They were Figgins, Kerr, and Fatty Wynn taking a run before breakfast.

"There are the wottahs, deah boys!" ejaculated Arthur Augustus. "Come on!"

Blake knitted his brows. The sun had gone down on the wrath of Study No. 6. But vengeance was at hand.

"Cut the rotters off from the New House," said Blake, "then you Shell bounders can pin them down, while we get into the New House and start on their study! We can get it done before brekker."

"Right you are!" said Tom Merry.

Figgins & Co., quite unsuspecting, were trotting away round the quadrangle. They passed round the School House and kept on their way towards

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the old chapel, a deserted spot at that early hour. Fast on their track went the School House party.

Figgins & Co. turned back at the ruins, and trotted back to the New House. Then they came face to face with the School House seven.

"Hallo!" said Figgins cheerily. "Out early?"

"Yaas, you wottah!"

"What!"

"Wottah!"

Figgins' eyes glinted.

"You silly asses came over to our House last night calling us names!" he said. "If it hadn't been for the prefect, we'd have pitched you out, neck and crop! What's the matter with you?"

"Collah the wottahs, deah boys!"

Figgins & Co. put up their hands promptly as the School House juniors rushed upon them.

But they had not much chance against seven.

There was a brief but terrific struggle, and Figgins, Kerr, and Wynn went bumping to the ground, and the Terrible Three sat on them.

"Fair play, you rotters!" roared Figgins, struggling furiously under Monty Lowther.

"We'll lick you, man to man!"

"Fair play, you worms!" gasped Kerr.

"Sit on the cads!" said Blake grimly. "It may interest you to know what you're going to get, Figgins. We're going to your study now."

"To my study?" said Figgins.

"Yes! We're going to smash every blessed thing there, same as you did in our study yesterday! Then we're going to lick you till you can't crawl—see?"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"As for the licking, you're welcome to give us all you can, man for man!" he said. "I'll undertake to mop any School House duffer you put forward. As for smashing up my study, I don't see what you're driving at; but we'll jolly well give you as good as you send! And as for what may have happened in your study yesterday, I don't know anything about it, as I wasn't there!"

"Oh, don't tell whoppers, you know!"

"You rotten worm! If this Shell idiot wasn't sitting on my chest, I'd show you whether I'm telling whoppers or not!" bellowed Figgins.

"Come on, deah boys!" said Arthur Augustus. "You three boundahs keep these wottahs here while we are w'eekin' the study!"

"Rely on us!"

"Lemme up!" roared Figgins.

"Quiet, dear boy!" said Lowther soothingly. "We'll let you up when the time comes for the licking."

"Stop a minute," said Kerr quietly. "Before you start wrecking our study, you might as well tell us what you're going to play such a dirty trick for."

Blake snorted.

"You know well enough. It's tit for tat."

"Yaas, wathah! One good turn deserves another!"

"Hold on, Blake!" said Tom Merry. "If the bounders have got anything to say, let them say it!"

"Suppose you let us know what we're accused of first?" said Kerr blandly. "It's a big advantage to know what you're accused of when you have to explain anything."

"Oh, don't be funny! Somebody mucked up Study No. 6 yesterday afternoon—sawed the furniture to pieces, smashed the glass, and made havoc of everything."

"And you think we played a dirty trick like that?" hooted Figgins.

"Well, your name was written on the wall," said Blake, somewhat impressed by Figgy's evident indignation.

"Anybody but a School House idiot would know that a cad who would do such a thing would try to put it on somebody else!" snorted Figgins.

"But you were there!" hooted Herries. "We heard you speak to Kerr."

"What? You heard me speak to Kerr in your study yesterday afternoon?"

"Yes."

"I heard you, too," said Blake. "So did Dig and Gussy. We were all outside the door."

"What time was it?" asked Kerr quietly.

"Between five and six."

"Any New House chap will tell you that we were at footer practice up to a quarter to six."

"Eh?"

The Terrible Three exchanged glances and rose. Figgins & Co. were released, and they scrambled to their feet.

"You are lettin' the wottahs go."

"There's a mistake," said Tom Merry quietly. "I said at the time that I didn't think Figgy would do such a rotten thing."

"But we heard 'em talking in the study!" bellowed Herries.

"You heard somebody talking, perhaps," said Kerr. "If you weren't an inmate of a home for idiots, you'd have guessed it was a trick."

"Look here, you New House worm—"

"What did you hear us say in the study?" asked Kerr.

Blake reflected. He was feeling a little uncomfortable now.

"Well, one rotter said, 'It's all right, Figgins, they can't get in,' and the other rotter said, 'Let 'em knock, Kerr!' We heard it quite plainly through the door."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"And did you recognise our voices?"

"Well, not specially—you can't recognise a whisper. But we heard the names quite distinctly."

"Of course you did. They were whispered distinctly specially for you to hear!" said Kerr scornfully.

"Bai Jove! I nevah thought of that!"

"You can ask any New House chap where we were between five and six yesterday, if you're cad enough to doubt our word," said Figgins.

"Weally, Figgins—"

"Oh, draw it mild!" said Blake uneasily.

"We—we didn't know you were going to deny it!"

"If you say you didn't do it—" said Digby.

"We can take your word," said Herries, after a pause. "But it's jolly queer!"

"Of course you can take Figgy's word," said Tom Merry, rather sharply. "It was somebody else, and whoever it was wanted you to think it was Figgins."

"Well, it looks like it now," admitted Blake.

"I—I say, if it wasn't you, Figgins, I'm sorry."

"If!" snorted Figgins. "You silly idiot, you ought to have known it wasn't us. If you think we'd play a dirty trick like that, it only shows you're a silly dummy!"

"Yes, and rather a rotter, too," said Fatty Wynn. "And if you're spoiling for a fight, you can come on, and these Shell bounders can see fair play."

Blake flushed angrily.

"Well, if you put it like that, we'll lick you, anyway!" he exclaimed.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Come on, then!" said Figgins, pushing back his cuffs. "I'll undertake to wipe up the ground with any School House idiot present!"

Monty Lowther jumped between the two.

"Hold on!" he said.

"Get out of the way, Lowther!"

"One moment!" said Lowther calmly. "Look here! Whatever cads they were in Study No 6 yesterday, they wanted to set you by the ears and start you hammering one another. There's no need to let them gain their point that I can see. They'll only cackle at you!"

"Well, that's so," said Blake, dropping his hands.

"Yaas, I nevah thought of that. I'll let you off, Figgins."

"Let yourself off, you mean!" hooted Figgins.

"Weally, you cheeky wottah—"

"Oh, cheese it!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "We don't want a House row now, and play into



"There was a fly on dad's head, mum!"

Half-a-crown has been awarded to B. Hoy, 96, West Circular Road, Belfast.

the hands of those cads, whoever they were. Let's try to find out who it was, and hammer them."

Figgins shrugged his shoulders.

"You can please yourselves about that," he said. "But you needn't trouble to speak to us again. I suppose you don't know any better, being silly idiots; but I don't like silly idiots who make rotten accusations, myself. Come on, you chaps; these silly fools make me ill!"

Figgins & Co. walked away with their noses in the air.

"Are you going to stand that?" demanded Herries sulphurously. "Let's mop up the ground with them."

"Of course, you're going to stand it," said Tom Merry. "You deserve it. Figgy's ratty at being suspected of a dirty trick, and it's natural enough, too. Let 'em go! What we've got to do is to find out who did it."

And Study No. 6, though with a growl or two, assented.

CHAPTER 10.

Gussy on the Track!

"B AI Jove, I've got it!" Arthur Augustus D'Arcy uttered that exclamation somewhat loudly at the breakfast-table.

Mr. Lathom, the master of the Fourth, glanced at the Gem Library.—No. 1,561.

along from the head of the table, and Arthur Augustus coloured.

"Really, D'Arcy!" said Mr. Lathom reprovingly.

And the swell of St. Jim's finished his breakfast in silence. But his eyes were gleaming.

When the juniors came out of the dining-room Arthur Augustus drew his chums aside, his eyes gleaming with excitement.

"I've got it, deah boys!" he exclaimed.

"Oh, bow-wow!" said Blake.

"Weally, Blake, I tell you I have got it! You can always wely on a fellow of tact and judgment to get at the twuth! It was Cwooke!"

"Crooke?" said Herries.

"Yaas, watah! They wuined our study because we thwashed them for gamblin' with young Wobinson in the box-woom!" said D'Arcy triumphantly.

Blake shook his head.

"Whoever was in the study shinned down the ivy from the window," he said. "Crooke would funk that!"

And Herries and Digby nodded assent to that observation.

"I have thought it out, deah boys," said Arthur Augustus cheerfully. "I have worked it out in my bwain. You see, the wotahs must have known we were working on the 'Weekly' in Tom Mewwy's study, and didn't expect to be caught there. We came back watah suddenly, and they were cornahed. I know Cwooke is a funk; but if we had caught him in the study—"

"We'd have pulverised him!" said Herries.

"Yaas; and so he scwewed up his couwage to climb down fwom the window. He funk'd a waggin' more than he funk'd a climb."

"Well, that's likely enough," said Blake. "He would have had a high old time if we had caught him on the spot! But somebody was with him."

"Levison or Mellish, of course—or pewwaps young Piggott!"

"I don't suppose that fag would have had the nerve. As for Mellish, he wasn't there; I saw him look out of his study while we were banging at the door."

"Then it was Levison and Cwooke."

"We'll jolly soon find out!" said Blake.

It was a clue, at least. Crooke and Levison had had a strong motive, and they were fellows who were capable of such a deed if they felt themselves safe from discovery.

Study No. 6 immediately proceeded to look for Crooke and Levison.

The precious pair were chatting in the quadrangle when the four Fourth Formers bore down on them. Crooke looked a little uneasy as they came up, but Levison nodded to them coolly.

"You know about our study being wrecked yesterday?" said Blake abruptly.

"Yes. A New House raid, wasn't it?" said Levison.

"It turns out that it wasn't."

"No?" said Levison, in surprise. "But I heard you say last night that you heard Figgins & Co. talking through the door."

"Yes, I remember that," said Crooke, with a nod.

"That was a trick. The cads who were there wanted to make us believe it was a House raid."

"Oh, how do you know?"

"Figgins says he wasn't there."

"Of course he'd say so!" said Levison, with a sneer.

"He wouldn't say so if it wasn't true. Besides,

he was at footer practice, and a lot of fellows saw him there."

"Looks to me like a got-up story," said Levison, shaking his head. "Figgins thought you might report it to Mr. Railton, so he had his witnesses all ready. That's how it looks to me."

"Well, it doesn't look like it to me," said Blake. "I want to know whether it was you two."

"Thanks!"

"Well, was it?" demanded the four juniors together.

Levison laughed.

"No, it wasn't."

"Where were you at the time, then?"

"Find out!"

"Collar them!" said Blake. "Perhaps a little bumping will freshen their memories and knock a little truth out of them!"



"Ten bob's no use to me," said Piggott coolly. "A q feeling in his pocket for the money. "Not much wares T

"Hold on!" said Levison coolly. "Suppose you tell us what time you're speaking about, and we may be able to tell you where we were."

"Between five and six yesterday afternoon. We were hammering at the study for twenty minutes at least, and we got in soon after six. But the ragers must have been there an hour from the damage they had done."

"Rather lucky for us we can prove an alibi, then!" grinned Levison. "Mind, you've got no right to question us; but, as we happen to have been somewhere else, we don't mind telling you. We refer you to Tom Merry."

"Tom Merry. You weren't with Tom Merry; we were with him."

"Tom Merry knows where we were at six o'clock."

Blake looked hard at Levison.

"Well, I'll ask Tom Merry," he said. "I wouldn't take your word, Levison. I'll ask Tom." Levison shrugged his shoulders. The chums of Study No. 6 hurried away, and the two rascals of the School House exchanged glances.

"Rather lucky we fixed up that alibi with Piggott!" drawled Levison. "The rotters mean business!"

"It cost a pretty penny!" growled Crooke.

"The little cad hasn't given you the two pounds back?" grinned Levison.

"No. I asked him last night, and he said he understood he was to keep it."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Yes, you can cackle! It wasn't your money!" snarled Crooke. "I'd have hammered him and taken it, only—only—"



nothing!" "Oh, you young villain!" exclaimed Crooke, smashing up a chap's study, so far as I can see!" said the mer.

"Better not," said Levison.

"I know that, hang you! He knows he's got us in a cleft stick. And that isn't all. He's asked me to lend him half-a-quid this afternoon."

"My hat! What did you say?"

"I said 'No,' of course!" growled Crooke. "He's not going to blackmail me! He's had two pounds of my money, and he's not going to touch another penny of it!"

And Crooke stalked away savagely. The chapel bell rang, and Levison moved off; but his face was very thoughtful now, and somewhat less confident. The game Piggott was playing was a game after his own heart, but he had not thought of attributing his own cunning and unscrupulousness to the fag.

Piggott's utter rascality did not shock Levison;

he was not easily shocked. But it gave him an inward feeling of apprehension. The secret was not quite so safe, after all, as he had supposed.

CHAPTER 11.

The Way of the Transgressor!

BLAKE did not have any opportunity of speaking to Tom Merry till after morning lessons.

Study No. 6 were waiting for the Terrible Three when the latter came out of the Shell class-room.

"Found the giddy wreckers?" asked Monty Lowther.

"Yaas, wathah! I am sure it was Cwooke & Co.," said Arthur Augustus.

"We've tackled Crooke and Levison about it," said Blake. "But Levison says you know where they were at the time, Tom."

The captain of the Shell looked surprised.

"Blessed if I know about them!" he said. "Oh! Hold on a minute! Let me see. When was it we saw them in Crooke's study, you fellows?"

"Soon after six," said Manners. "About half-past."

"That doesn't prove anything," said Blake. "They got out of the study window before six."

"Yes. But we happened to know they were in the box-room before that," said Tom.

"You saw them there?"

"No. But we knew they were there. They were bullying young Piggott into playing cards, and welshing him."

"Piggott? Why, he's one of their set!"

"They've fallen out. Piggott came to me to complain," said Tom Merry.

"They'd done him out of two pounds. I suppose because we made them hand back the plunder from young Robinson. They denied it at first, but it was proved by the number of a currency note, and we made them shell out."

"But are you sure they were in the box-room just at that time?" asked Blake, disappointed.

"Yes. Piggott came to complain as soon as he got away from them, and he said they'd forced him to stay there nearly an hour, I think. I should have thought of Levison myself, but for that."

"Hallo! What's the row?" asked Manners suddenly.

There was a howl from the end of the passage.

"Crooke and Piggott!" said Tom Merry, compressing his lips.

The cad of the Shell had been talking to Piggott, and he had suddenly changed from words to action. His finger and thumb closed on Piggott's ear, and the fag uttered a loud howl.

Tom Merry ran along the passage, his brow very dark.

"Let him go. Crooke!"

Crooke, his face black with rage, released the rascal of the Third. Piggott rubbed his ear, giving Crooke a venomous and threatening look. "Mind your own business, Tom Merry!" said Crooke, choking with rage.

"You are ragging that kid because he told me of your welshing yesterday, I suppose!" said Tom.

"Mind your own business!"

"I'll jolly well tell him!" said Piggott.

"If it isn't that, what is it?" demanded Tom Merry.

"Find out!"

"We chipped in to stop your rascally games, Crooke! You won't take it out of Piggott, either!"

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You won't touch him again! If he does, Piggott, let me know!"

"I will!" said Piggott, with a curious glimmer in his eyes.

He gave Crooke an expressive look, and scudded off.

Crooke gritted his teeth. With a look of hatred at the Co., he walked away.

"I've a jolly good mind to hammer him, anyway!" growled Tom Merry. "Of course, he's down on the kid for giving him away to us!"

"It's rather lucky for him Piggott gave him away to you, all the same!" said Blake grimly.

"How do you mean?"

"Because, if we didn't know those rotters had been in the box-room welsing Piggott, we should feel jolly sure they were the rotters who wrecked our study."

"Yaas, wathah!"

"But if it wasn't Crooke and Levison, who the thunder was it?" demanded Herries. "We've got to find out who it was!"

"What about Mellish?"

"Well, I don't believe he'd have the nerve, anyway; but it wasn't Mellish. He was looking on while we were trying to get into Study No. 6."

"Then it beats me," said Tom Merry. "Excepting Crooke and Levison and Mellish, I can't think of a chap in the House who'd do such a rotten, mean thing."

"Must have been a New House crowd, after all—though not Figgins," said Digby.

"It certainly wasn't Figgins," said Tom Merry decidedly. "Figg's word is as good as gold. It beats me hollow!"

"Well, we're going to find out who it was," said Blake. "He's got to be found."

"We'll all do our best," said Tom. "It would be rotten if such beastly cads got off scot-free!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

Tom Merry & Co. proceeded to make investigations, and a good many more fellows joined in to help them. But the result was nil.

The finger of scorn pointed, naturally, to Crooke

and Levison; but their alibi was complete, and they were considered clear.

Who else to suspect was a puzzle.

The juniors came round to the conclusion that it was, after all, a House rag, though Figgins & Co. had not been concerned in it. Redfern & Co. of the New House disclaimed all knowledge of the matter, though they were not suspected. Reddy was quite incapable of such a wanton outrage. How to "nail" the delinquents was a problem it was not easy to solve.

That evening Tom Merry & Co. held council in the Common-room, discussing the problem. Nothing had come to light. Even if Blake & Co. had been inclined to forgive and forget—which they were not—the discomfort of the study would have kept the matter alive.

The refurnishing was likely to hang fire for some time, funds being decidedly low with the Co.

While the council of war was held in the Common-room, Levison was paying a call to Gerald Crooke's study. Crooke received him with a glum brow.

"I've seen young Piggott," said Levison, coming in and shutting the door and speaking in a low voice.

"Hang young Piggott!" said Crooke savagely.

"He told me you'd pulled his ear this morning when he asked you for a loan of half-a-quid."

"I'll pull it again, too!" said Crooke.

"Better let him have the half-quid!"

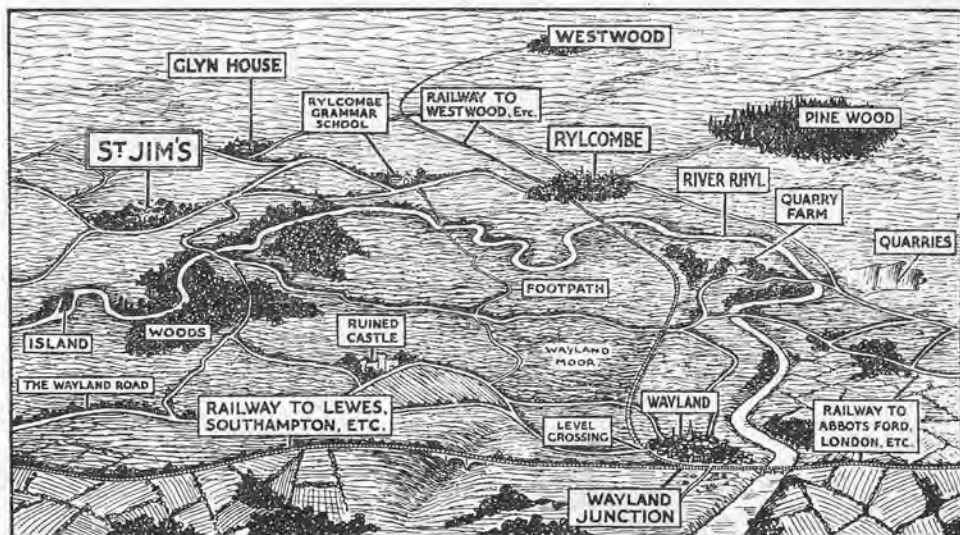
"You can let him have one, if you like!" sneered Crooke. "He's dished me out of two pounds already! He's not touching any more of my money!"

"He says if he doesn't get that half-quid, he's going to make a clean breast of it to Tom Merry," said Levison uneasily.

"He would get a licking for his pains! He lied to Tom Merry, and took him in!"

"I believe he means business."

"The awful young rotter! And we've been his pals, too," said Crooke. "Now he's got us under



A plan showing the principal places of interest around St. Jim's.

WHO'S WHO at ST. JIM'S!

*All the Information You Want Concerning
the School, its Staff and its Scholars.*



Mr. Horace Ratcliff,
the irascible master of
the New House.



Jack Blake, the leader
of Study No. 6.

FOUNDED in 1570, St. Jim's is delightfully situated in the heart of Sussex, one mile from the pleasant little rustic village of Rylcombe, near which the River Rhyl winds its course. Accommodation is provided for nearly 300 scholars. The School House—the original structure—containing 200, and the New House—added in 1852—boarding just under 100 pupils.

The New House is only a boarding house, for it was built to contain the dormitories, studies, and Common-rooms. The New House juniors have to cross the quadrangle for prayers, classes, and calling-over.

The juniors below the Fourth Form in both Houses have to attend preparation in the Form-room from 7 p.m. to 8 p.m. every evening, while those in higher Forms do the work in their studies.

Eric Kildare, the St. Jim's captain, has James Monteith, of the New House, as second in command, and ten other prefects to maintain authority.

School House: Baker, Rushden, Langton, Knox, Darrell, Dudley.

New House: Monteith, Gray, Webb, Sefton.

Every branch of sport is indulged in by the boys, cricket and football being compulsory.

THE STAFF.

Headmaster: Richard Holmes, M.A.

Housemasters: Horace Ratcliff, M.A. (New House). Also

Fifth Form—Master. Victor Raiton, M.A. (School House),

and master of the Sixth Form.

Fourth Form Master: Philip

G. Lathom, B.A.

Master of the Shell: Leslie M. Linton, M.A.

Third Form Master: Henry Selby, B.Sc.

Second Form Master: Percy Carrington, B.A.

French Master: Monsieur le Blanc Morny.

German Master: Herr Gottfried Schneider.

School Porter: Ephraim Taggles.

House Dame (School House): Mrs. Mimms.

House Dame (New House): Mrs. Kenwigg.

Nurse: Marie Rivers.

School Tuckshop: Martha Taggles.

Page-boy: Toby Marsh.



Dr. Richard Holmes,
the headmaster of
St. Jim's.

SCHOOL ROUTINE.

(Subject to alteration.)

Rising Bell: 7 a.m.

Chapel: 7.50 a.m.

Breakfast: 8 a.m.

Morning School: 9 a.m. to

12 noon.

Dinner: 1 p.m.

Afternoon School (Wednesdays and Saturdays

excepted): 2 p.m. to 4 p.m.

Recreation: 4 p.m. to 5.30 p.m.

Tea in Big Hall (optional): 5.30 p.m.

Calling-over: 7 p.m.

Preparation: 7 p.m. to 8 p.m.

Recreation, juniors: 8 p.m. to 9.30 p.m.; seniors:

8 p.m. to 10 p.m.

Bed-time, juniors: 9.30 p.m.; seniors: 10 p.m.

NOTES ON THE PRINCIPAL CHARACTERS.

BAKER, STANLEY.—A valiant Sixth-Former, loyal to Kildare, and excelling in all sports. A member of the School House and plays for the St. Jim's First Eleven at football and cricket. Age 17 years 7 months.

BLAKE, JACK.—A sturdy son of Yorkshire, and a fine footballer and cricketer. Plays at inside-right for St. Jim's junior football team, and is a good change bowler at cricket. He is always ready for a jape, and is the leader of Study No. 6, which he shares with Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, George Herries, and Robert Digby. Age 15 years 4 months. Form, Fourth. School House.

BROOKE, DICK.—The day-boy of St. Jim's, and a jolly good fellow. Lives on the outskirts of Wayland Moor, and works for his living in his spare time. Form, Fourth. Age 15 years 3 months.

CROOKE, GERALD.—The cad of the Shell Form. Associated with Levison in many shady doings, and has often come within an ace of expulsion. Son of a rich stockbroker, and has more pocket-money than is good for him. Age 15 years 9 months. Study No. 7. School House.

CUTTS, GERALD.—The black sheep of the Fifth Form, who spends his days in listless idleness and his nights in pub-haunting. A bit of a dandy; cool and unscrupulous in all his shady undertakings. Leader of the "smart set" in the Fifth. Age 17 years. School House.

(Continued next week.)

his thumb, all he thinks of is screwing money out of us! Well, he won't get any more out of me!"

"He's coming here to speak to you," said Levison. "I told him I'd see you and—"

"If he does, I'll boot him out! You can pay him to hold his tongue, if you like."

"I'm stony!"

"I should be stony jolly soon, if I went on being blackmailed by that young scoundrel. It's not good enough."

Levison knitted his brows. The door opened, and Piggott sidled into the study.

Crooke rose to his feet, with a savage look.

"What do you want?" he asked.

Piggott kept close to the door, his hand upon it.

"I want you to lend me a quid, Crooke."

"A quid! It was half-a-quid this morning."

"The price has gone up," said the fag, with cool

self-possession. "The fact is, I've had bad luck.

I've been playing cards with Clampe, and Clampe

cleared me out of every cent."

"More fool you!"

"But I knew you would make me a loan, Crooke, and wouldn't bother me for the money again in a hurry, either."

"Your mistake," said Crooke. "Get out of this study!"

Piggott's eyes glittered.

"If I go out of this study without that quid, I go straight to Tom Merry," he said. "They're talking it over now. They'll be glad to hear what I could tell them, Crooke!"

Crooke made a furious movement towards him, and the fag whipped into the passage warily.

"Hands off!" he said. "I came jolly near telling Tom Merry this morning. If you touch me again, I swear I'll go to him!"

"Don't be a fool, Crooke," said Levison uneasily. "Let him have the quid."

"Simply must have it!" said Piggott from the doorway. "I'm quite stony. Sorry, old pal, but necessity knows no law, you know."

"You won't get anything out of me!" said Crooke.

"Good-bye, then!"

Piggott went down the passage.

Levison drove his hands deep into his pockets, his face black and sullen.

Crooke stood for a moment undecided; then he ran to the door.

"Piggott!" he called out, in a stifled voice.

The fag looked back.

"Well?" he said.

"Come here!"

Piggott came back, keeping out of reach of the infuriated Shell fellow, however.

Crooke fumbled in his pocket.

"I'll make it ten bob," he muttered.

"Thanks! That's no use to me. A quid or nothing!" said Piggott coolly.

"Oh, you young villain!"

"Not much worse than smashing up a chap's study, so far as I can see!" said Piggott. "Anyway, that's the figure."

Crooke hesitated a moment, but the evil glitter in the young rascal's eyes decided him. He handed a pound-note to the fag, who took it and walked away, without a word of thanks.

Crooke stepped back into his study, pale with rage.

"How long is this going on?" he muttered thickly. "As soon as that young scoundrel is hard up again, he'll come to me for more."

"I shouldn't wonder," said Levison moodily. "I—I never thought he'd turn out like that."

"Your fault, for trusting a rotten rascal like that."

"Oh, cheese it! If he weren't a rotten rascal, he wouldn't tell lies for us," said Levison irritably. "I couldn't have gone to a decent chap, I suppose, and asked him to swear that black was white."

"Well, I'm not going to stand much more of it!" snarled Crooke. "I'd rather have the whole affair come out than be bled like this!"

Levison shrugged his shoulders and quitted the study.

Crooke remained alone in an unenviable mood. He knew that he dared not resist the fag's demands; he knew that Piggott knew it, too. He dared not let the young rascal betray him, and he knew that he had to pay. As soon as Piggott wanted money again, he would come for it, and Crooke would have to hand it over. It was not a pleasant prospect. The way of the transgressor was hard.

CHAPTER 12.

Kerr is Called In!

FIGGINS & CO. were at tea in their study in the New House. They were not looking quite so cheerful as usual.

As a matter of fact, the row with the School House fellows weighed a little on their minds.

Rows, certainly, were of common enough occurrence between the rivals of St. Jim's, but they were generally good-tempered, and whichever party might get the best of it, the little "scraps" left no sting behind, even if they resulted in thick ears and swollen noses.

But the present trouble was on a different footing. Figgins & Co. had been suspected of a rotten, mean action, and it ruffled them considerably. And there had been some hesitation in

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taking their word, which ruffled them still more. They had resolved not to continue on speaking terms with Tom Merry & Co., and that was a decidedly unpleasant change from the old pleasant footing. It was more especially unpleasant for George Figgins, because D'Arcy's Cousin Ethel was expected to visit the school shortly, and on the occasion of Cousin Ethel's visit, the entree into Study No. 6 was a thing greatly desired on the part of Figgins.

So Figgins & Co. looked a little ruffled and glum, though it did not affect their appetite.

Fatty Wynn was piling in, in his well-known way, and deriving considerable consolation from the cake.

Tap!

"Oh, come in!" growled Figgins.

Figgins started to his feet the next moment, as the door opened and disclosed a crowd of School House fellows.

Tom Merry & Co. came in—seven of them.

The New House fellows eyed them grimly.

"Well, what the dickens do you want?" said Figgins gruffly.

"Weally, Figgins, that is not vewy polite," remonstrated Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

"I've no politeness to waste on a set of silly owls."

"I wefuse to be called a silly owl!"

"Look here, Figgins—"

"We've come—"

"I can see you've come," said Figgins, "and the sooner you go again, the better I shall like it. I don't like fellows of your sort over here—"

The School House party turned very red. The usually genial and good-natured Figgins was decidedly ratty, and he was not mincing his words.

"Well, there's no need to be a pig about it," snapped Jack Blake. "Let's get out, you fellows. We were fools to come."

"Well, you are fools, aren't you?" said Fatty Wynn.

"Weally, Wynn—"

"Good-bye!" said Figgins grimly. "Don't trouble to call again!"

"We won't, you New House rotter!" growled Herries.

"Hold on!" said Tom Merry quietly. "It was my idea to come here, Figgins. There's no need to get your back up."

"Not when a silly set of silly idiots suspect this study of playing a rotten trick, and lying about it afterwards?" said Figgins sarcastically. "I suppose that wouldn't hurt School House feelings. We're rather more particular on this side."

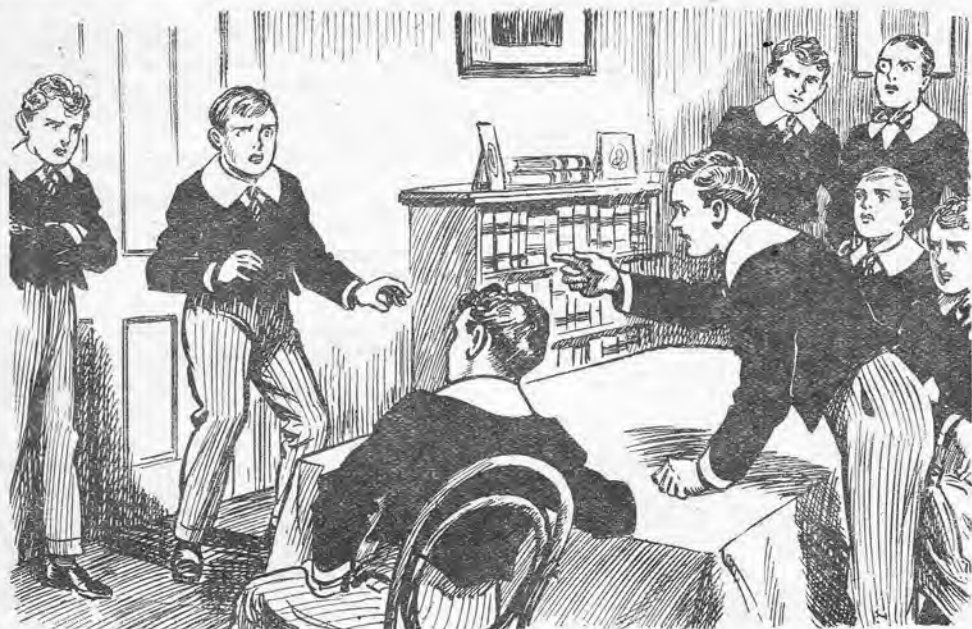
"You don't give a chap much chance to speak," said Tom. "It's true we thought it was you fellows mucked up Study No. 6, owing to the trick some rotters played there; but that was a mistake. A chap can't do more than own up to a mistake."

"Between gentlemen, an apology covahs ewevythin!" said D'Arcy stiffly.

"Oh, if you've come to apologise—" said Figgins.

"We haven't!" growled Blake. "I was going to say that I was sorry, but I'm blessed if I will now. You can go and eat coke, you New House worm!"

"Yaas, wathah! I shall certainly wefuse to cawwy out my intention of sayin' that I am sowwy. I am sowwy, as a mattah of fact, but I



"You'd better own up, Piggott," said Tom Merry. "Unless you do, I shall write to your father about the note, and then it will all come out." "Look here, I—I own up!" gasped Piggott. "Levison and Crooke weren't in the box-room. They were in Study No. 6!"

uttahly wefuse to admit anythin' of the sort to you, Figgins!"

Figgins grinned.

"Perhaps I was rather rusty," he said. "But it isn't nice to be suspected of rotten things, even if you think you've got evidence against the chap. You wouldn't like it, I suppose. But I don't want to bear grudges about it. You must admit that you ought to have had more sense."

"That'll do, Figgins," said Kerr. "Don't rub it in. It's jolly decent of them to own up that they've been silly asses!"

"We don't!" howled Blake. "We admit it was a mistake, that's all."

"We shouldn't have made such a mistake," said Figgins loftily. "We should have suspected at once that it was a trick."

"Rats!"

"Look here——"

"Oh, don't row about nothing!" said Kerr. "If you School House duffers want something to do, why don't you look for the wreckers and make an example of them?"

"That's partly what we've come about," said Tom Merry indignantly. "We thought you'd be willing to help us, only Figgins starts ragging the minute we get into the study."

"Oh, if you want us to help you, that's a different matter!" said Figgins amicably. "I take back what I said."

"Certainly!" said Fatty Wynn. "As Cock House of St. Jim's, it's up to us to help you School House kids."

"If Wynn is going to be funny——" began Digby.

"Have some of the cake, and don't jaw!" said Fatty Wynn. "Sit down and start on the cake,

and tell us your little troubles. We'll see you through."

"You wouldn't be any use, fathead! It's Kerr we want," said Tom Merry. "The fact is, Figgy, we can't work out who did that trick in Study No. 6, and we've come to borrow your Scotsman."

Kerr chuckled.

"Go ahead!" he said.

"We admit that Kerr's got rather a keen brain, though he's a New House idiot," said Blake. "If he can help us——"

"I'll do my best," said Kerr. "I think I can give you a tip already. I've heard about you fellows ragging Crooke & Co. yesterday. In the box-room, wasn't it?"

"Yes, but——"

"Well, it looks to me as if they did it—tit for tat."

"Well, we've thought of them," said Blake; "but they've proved an alibi."

"They've proved they were somewhere else at the time?"

"Yes."

"Oh, that alters the case, of course."

"And we simply can't get on to it," said Tom Merry. "We think it must have been some New House chap—not you fellows, of course. We can't think of anybody in the School House who could have done it."

"Rot!" said Figgins promptly.

"Utter rot!" said Fatty Wynn.

"Look here, Figgins——"

"Hold on!" said Kerr. "Let's settle about Crooke & Co. first. What did you do to them yesterday?"

"Made them give young Robinson back his
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money, and then made Robinson thrash 'em with a cricket stump."

"I suppose they were wild?"

"Absolutely!"

"But they've proved that they weren't in Study No. 6?"

"Yes. Blake got into the study at six, by forcing the door. The ragers had just cleared out of the window. Well, up to six o'clock Crooke and Levison's time is accounted for."

"Let's hear all about the alibi."

Tom Merry explained Piggott's visit to his study, and the subsequent scene with Crooke and Levison.

The Scots junior listened attentively.

"That settles it, you see," concluded the captain of the Shell.

"Not quite, I think," said Kerr.

"My dear chap, if Crooke and Levison were in the box-room, welshing Piggott, they couldn't have been in Study No. 6, breaking up the happy home."

"Yes. But were they? Piggott's their pal—"

"They've quarrelled, you see."

"How do you know?"

"Why, you see, Piggott told us, and—and—"

"Piggott's the biggest whopper-merchant in the school. Didn't it occur to you that the three of them had fixed up this alibi in advance, brand-new, and all ready for the time when you started making inquiries?"

"Oh!"

Tom Merry & Co. looked at each other sheepishly. Certainly that had never occurred to them.

"Suppose Crooke, Levison, and Piggott were hand in glove, too, and got the whole story together to throw dust in your eyes?" said Kerr.

"Bai Jove!"

"But—but Crooke and Levison denied it," said Tom. "They said at first that Piggott was lying, and it was only by the number of a banknote that it was settled."

"Yaas, wathah! That wathah knocks your ideah on the head, Kerr, deah boy!"

Kerr shook his head.

"That might have been part of the game," he said. "If Crooke and Levison had backed up Piggott's statement at once, even you duffers might have guessed that it was a plant. By having a dispute with him, and letting him prove his point, they gave the impression that the whole thing was genuine."

"My hat!" said Tom Merry.

"But—but Crooke was pitching into him today," said Manners. "We thought it was because Piggott told us about him. If they're hand-in-glove, Piggott wouldn't let Crooke pitch into him."

"I don't know about that. Rogues fall out, sometimes, you know; or it might have been a scene for your benefit."

The School House juniors were silent.

"Anyway," went on Kerr's quiet voice, "it's jolly curious that if those cads have really quarrelled among themselves, and Levison and Crooke were really skinning their pal in the box-room, it should have happened just at the time the ragging was going on in Study No. 6, and that Piggott should have come to you with the yarn in time to prove an alibi for Levison and Crooke. Of course, coincidences do happen; but that one looks suspicious to me."

"My hat!" said Blake, with a deep breath.

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"These Shell bounders have been taken in, of course. Piggott fooled them and spoofed them."

"Bai Jove! But how are we goin' to pprove it?" said D'Arcy dubiously. "The young wascal is not likely to own up."

"There are ways and means," said Kerr.

"We could lick him, but—but we don't want to do that if he's been telling the truth."

"Piggott claimed to have lost two pounds in the box-room?"

"Yes; and it was handed back—we saw to that."

"Two pounds is a big sum for a fag in the Third to have."

"Yes; I remarked on that. Piggott said he'd had a ten-shilling note from his pater, and had thirty shillings saved up in his money-box," said Tom. "It was the number on the note that proved it was his, and made Levison own up—unless it was all a plant, of course."

"If Piggott was saving money up in a money-box, you can find that out from some of the Third, and make him show the money-box, too. If he had that note from his pater, let him tell you when the letter came with it in. Mention to him that you're going to ask his pater if he sent him a note with that particular number."

"Bai Jove!"

"It was a clever dodge, that currency-note bisney, but it works both ways," said Kerr. "If his pater really sent it to him, that clears Piggott. You can find out from his pater. If it's all genuine, Piggott has nothing to fear from your writing to his father. By the way, how did Piggott come to have the number on the note? Fags are not usually so jolly careful with their money."

"He said his father always told him to take the numbers."

"Good; then his pater will know the number. Apply to Piggott senior," smiled Kerr. "Only I've got a strong suspicion that as soon as you tell Piggott you're going to ask his pater, he'll own up."

"We'll jolly soon see!" said Tom Merry.

"Thanks awfully for the tip, Kerr!"

"Not at all, dear boy," grinned Piggins. "I'll always lend you my 'Scotsman' when you want anything thought out for you!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And Tom Merry & Co. quitted the study, feeling that they were upon the track at last.

CHAPTER 13.

Bowled Out!

WALLY of the Third, the minor of the great Arthur Augustus, came into the Third Form Room and looked round. Then he beckoned to Piggott.

There was a feed going on on one of the desks. Piggott was standing treat to some of his friends. Piggott was in great funds of late, and had been making quite a splash in the Third Form, where "quids" were not very common. Piggott was not much liked by his Form-fellows, as a rule; but his jam tarts were very good, and his ginger-pops excellent; thus he was enjoying something like a brief popularity.

"This way, Piggy!" called out Wally.

"Can't come, D'Arcy minor!"

"Can't come, can't you?" said Wally warmly.

"Throw him over to me, Jameson!"

"Oh, we're feeding, Wally!" said Jameson.

"Let him alone, and come and have some tarts."

"I don't want any tarts; I want Piggott!" said

Wally truculently. "Piggy's coming for a little trot with me. Come on, Piggy!"

As Wally's finger and thumb closed on Piggott's ear as he spoke, Piggott hadn't much choice about coming on. He rose with a scowl. He did not like the autocratic Wally; indeed, if his run of luck continued, Piggott was already debating in his mind whether he might not be able to set up as D'Arcy minor's rival in the Third.

"Look here, D'Arcy minor, I don't want to come!" he growled. "You're not going to bully me, so there!"

"This way, Piggy," said Wally, unheeding. He slipped his arm through Piggott's and led him out of the Form-room.

It was only a well-founded fear of Wally's celebrated "left-handers" that made Piggott go quietly.

"Where are we going, then?" he snapped.

"Don't ask questions, young shaver. You're coming with me," said Wally.

Piggott felt vaguely uneasy, he hardly knew why, as Wally walked him up the Shell passage. They stopped at the door of Tom Merry's study, and Wally kicked it open.

Tom Merry & Co. were all there. They were waiting for Piggott. It had been Gussy's idea to make use of his minor to lead the lamb to the slaughter, so to speak, and Wally obliged.

Wally had been told the circumstances, and he had agreed that Piggott should be questioned; but, as head of the Third Form, he was going to be present to see fair play.

"Here he is," growled Herries.

"Look here, what's the little game?" demanded Piggott, his uneasiness increasing. "I didn't want to come here."

"It's all serene, Piggy," said Wally, shutting the door. "I'm looking after you. If you're all right, you're as safe as houses. If you've done what these chaps think you've done, I am going to give you a thundering licking. But they aren't going to touch you; I won't let 'em."

"Bai Jove! Will you thrash us all wound, Wally?" asked Arthur Augustus, with heavy sarcasm.

"Oh, don't you begin, Gus! Now, you fellows, go ahead," said Wally. "Don't waste my time. I've got a mill on in the Form-room this evening."

"We want to ask you a few questions, Piggott," said Tom Merry quietly, with his eyes fixed on the fat's uneasy face.

"You can go ahead," said Piggott.

"You told us that Crooke and Levison were in

the box-room with you yesterday, between five and six o'clock."

"Yes, they were."

"We've got an idea that they were in Study No. 6, wrecking the place."

"They couldn't be in two places at once, could they?" said Piggott.

"They didn't get you to spin that yarn to spoof us?"

"Hardly."

"We can't help suspecting that it was a put-up game," said Tom. "But we only want to get at the facts. You claimed a note from Levison."

"Yes, it was mine."

"Where did you get it from?"

"My pater sent it as a tip."

"Very good. And you had thirty shillings in a money-box, too?"

"Ye-es," said Piggott, with a rather uneasy look at D'Arcy minor. The latter's eyes opened wide, and he whistled.

"This is the first I've heard of it," said Wally.

"Where do you keep that money-box, Piggy?"

"Can you produce the box?" asked Tom.

"I—I chucked it away to-day," stammered Piggott. "It was an old one. I—I had to break it to get the money out, you see—it was that kind—and it wasn't worth keeping."

"Oh, then we will come back to the note! You say your father sent it to you?"

"Yes, he did."

"When did he send it?"

"Let me see—Tuesday."

"Very good. You don't mind my writing to your father, to have your statement confirmed?"

"Write to my father?" Piggott gasped.

"Yes. Why not? Of course, we shan't say a word about your playing cards. I mean simply to ask him the number of the note he sent you on Tuesday, so that its ownership can be settled."

Piggott's face was pale now. He cast a long-ing glance towards the door. But D'Arcy minor had his back to it.

It did not need much more than a glance at Piggott's scared face to see how the matter lay.

Tom Merry's brow grew very stern.

"You'd better own up, Piggott," he said quietly. "Unless you do, I shall certainly write to your father about the note, and then it will come out."

"I—I—" Piggott stammered. "I—I—the pater didn't send me that note, really. It—it—"

"We knew he didn't," said Tom. "It was Crooke's or Levison's, and the whole yarn was

(Continued on the next page.)

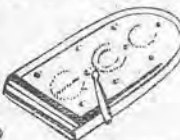
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got up to make us believe they were in the box-room when they were really wrecking Study No. 6."

"I—I suppose it was!" gasped Piggott. "I—I stood by them. They're my pals, you know, and they were in a blue funk about being found out. Blessed if I know how you got on to it."

The young rascal was not thinking of further denials now. It was useless to wait till a letter to his father proved that he had lied. He sidled towards the door, where he found Wally pushing back his cuffs.

"Look here, I—I own up!" gasped Piggott. "Lemme out, will you? They weren't in the box-room. They—they asked me to spin that yarn, and I did it. They were in Study No. 6. Now lemme go!"

"You can go, as far as we're concerned," said Jack Blake contemptuously.

"But not so far as I'm concerned," grinned Wally. "Put up your paws, Piggy, and these old fogies can see fair play."

"I won't!" yelled Piggott.

"You're a disgrace to the Third!" said Wally severely. "You've been treating the kids with Crooke's tin. You're a little rotter, and I'm going to show these old duffers how I keep rotters in order in the Third. You can suit yourself about putting up your paws. You're going to have it!"

And Wally advanced to the attack.

There was no escape for the rascal of the Third, and he put up his hands desperately. The next few minutes were very exciting. Tom Merry & Co. looked on grimly. Piggott put up the best fight he was capable of, but cigarettes and lack of exercise made him no match for D'Arcy minor, who was as hard as nails. For those few minutes it seemed to the unhappy Piggott that he was caught in a threshing-machine.

Bump!

A left-hander laid him on the study carpet at last, and he stayed there, groaning dismally. "Bwavo, Wally!" chirruped Arthur Augustus.

Wally sniffed.

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"Oh, that fag's nothing!" he said. "I could lick any of you just as easily."

"Weally, you cheeky little wascal——"

"Bow-wow!" said Wally independently; and he walked out of the study, and sauntered down the passage with his hands in his pockets, whistling shrilly.

Piggott of the Third, clapping his nose in anguish, limped after him.

"And now," said Blake grimly, "we're going to call on Crooke. You Shellfish can come and see fair play, if you like."

"Hear, hear!"

CHAPTER 14.

Reprisals!

"YOUR deal!" said Crooke.

Crooke's studymate was downstairs, but Levison was with him. There was a haze of cigarette smoke in the study. The "little game" was suddenly interrupted as the door was hurled open.

Crooke and Levison jumped up in alarm. Blake, Herries, Digby, and D'Arcy walked in, and the Terrible Three brought up the rear.

Then the door was closed, and the three put their backs to it. They were only lookers-on now; as Lowther remarked, they were dead in that act.

"What do you want, confound you?" snarled Crooke.

"Piggott's confessed," said Blake tersely.

Levison changed colour, and retreated round the table.

Crooke's jaw dropped.

"Yaas, wathah, you wottah! We have dis-covahed that you were the wotten w'eckahs in our study," said Arthur Augustus. "Now the time has come for wepwivals."

Crooke ground his teeth.

"The little beast—after screwing money out of me——" He broke off.

"Oh, he screwed money out of you, did he?" said Blake. "Serve you right! But he hadn't any choice about confessing. He was bowled out."

"You didn't bowl him out, I'll wager!" sneered Levison.

"I don't mind admitting that it was Kerr," said Blake coolly. "But it's out now, and we know who wrecked our study. We're going to give you a hiding each, and smash up your props in exactly the same way."

"Very courageous—seven to two!" jeered Levison.

"Weally, you wottah——"

"Choose your man!" said Blake. "You know you'll get fair play. Pick your man, and you, too, Crooke."

"Hang you! Get out of my study!"

"Pway don't waste any time on the wottahs, deah boys!" Arthur Augustus pushed back his immaculate cuffs. "I'm goin' for Crooke."

"Keep off, hang you!" yelled Crooke.

"I wefuse to keep off, Cwooke!"

"You're my mutton, Levison," said Blake cheerily. "Come on!"

Levison and Crooke had no choice about it.

Blake and D'Arcy were attacking hotly. Herries and Digby stood back with the Terrible Three from the combat.

The two rascals of the School House received strict fair play. But it was not of much use



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PEN PALS COUPON

15-1-38

to them. In three or four minutes they were beaten to the wide, and lay gasping on the floor, and declined to rise again for any consideration whatever.

"Are you weally finished, Cwooke?" asked Arthur Augustus. "I will wait while you have a west, if you like."

Groan!

"Pewpaws you would like to give me a turn, Levison?"

Groan!

Arthur Augustus sniffed.

"It was weally hardly worth a chap's while makin' himself dustay to lick these funkay wof-tahs," he remarked. "Get on with the waggin'!"

Study No. 6 were already getting on with the ragging. The looking-glass crashed as it came down, and the clock joined it in fragments in the grate.

Crooke panted with rage.

"I'll tell this to the Housemaster!"

"Just as you like, deah boy. He will heah the whole stowy, that is all. Pway be carefulnly to bweak up Cwooke's things, deah boys, and don't destwoy anythin' belongin' to his study-mate."

"What-ho!"

Crash, crash, crash!

It was not difficult to distinguish Crooke's property. Crooke was the wealthiest fellow in the Shell, and his study appointments were luxurious and extensive. In case of doubt, the avengers generously spared the article concerned. But the gilt looking-glass, the marble clock, the pier-glass, the handsome bookcase, the

cabinet, the screen—all very expensive articles belonging to George Gerald Crooke—were speedily reduced to worthless fragments.

Crooke, kicked out of the way by the raggers, stood panting in a corner, watching.

The work of destruction in Study No. 6 had been complete, and Blake & Co. were emulating the example that had been set them.

"Oh, you rotters!" panted Crooke. "I'll pay you out for this!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Come along, Levison! You're the next!"

Levison was taken along the passage, with a grip on either arm, to his own study. Crooke was left, groaning, in the midst of the wreckage. His desire was strong to report the raid to the Housemaster, but it was too dangerous. Certainly Blake & Co. would have been punished for taking the law into their own hands; but Crooke's own raid would have been punished still more severely, to say nothing of the risk of the card-playing coming to light, which would have meant the sack.

Crooke had to grin and bear it. At all events, he had to bear it.

"Here we are again!" said Blake, marching Levison into his study.

Lumley-Lumley, Trimble, and Mellish were there, and they stared.

"What's the game?" asked Lumley-Lumley.

"Sorry to disturb you," said Blake politely. "Levison wrecked our study yesterday, and we've come to smash up his crocks. Point them out, and we shan't make any mistake."

(Continued on page 35.)

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BULLY AND DANDY!

By FRANK RICHARDS.

(Author of the grand long yarns of Greyfriars appearing every Saturday in our companion paper, the "Magnet.")



"Ow! Murder! Help! Fire!" Bunter shrieked and squirmed as the Greek, in his passionate rage, thrashed him brutally with his walking cane. There was a sound of footsteps and Wharton appeared in the doorway. "You bully!" he exclaimed. "Stop that!"

The New Sixth Former!

"HAVE you seen him?" Harry Wharton and Frank Nugent of the Greyfriars Remove were examining the football ground to see whether it would be possible to play on it after the last few days' vile weather, when Bob Cherry came up, grinning almost from ear to ear, and propounded that query.

"Him!" said Wharton, looking puzzled. "There are a good many 'hims' at Greyfriars, I believe, Bob. Which particular 'him' are you referring to?"

"The new chap in the Sixth."

"Haven't noticed him," said Wharton. "But how did a new chap come right into the Sixth, by the way?"

"Oh, of course, he's been to another school before. I hear that he's great guns on Greek—as, of course, he would be, as he's a Greek himself. But you should see him—he's a ripper. There are some dressy fellows in the Fifth and Sixth, but Ionides—that's his name—knocks them all into a cocked hat. But you must come and see him for yourselves. He'll surprise you!"

"Well, we shan't get any footer," said Wharton, "the ground's too rotten. We may as well go in, Frank."

"Good! Follow the ball!"

Nugent, who had a ball under his arm, dropped it and kicked it as it bounced. The three juniors raced after it, shouldering one another off the ball and keeping the leather on the move.

"Look out!" shouted Bob Cherry, suddenly. Wharton and Nugent had overtaken the bounding ball together, and were kicking at the

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same moment, too busy just then to notice that two seniors were crossing their path.

The two were Wingate, the captain of Greyfriars, and a slim, dark-skinned fellow, dressed with the greatest elegance. He was an undeniably handsome fellow, though somewhat effeminate in appearance, and at a glance it could be seen that he was a foreigner. He held his nose well in the air, and there was a lurking suspicion of patronage in his manner, as he looked about him. It was evident that the new fellow in the Sixth Form at Greyfriars had an excellent opinion of himself.

The contrast between the big, rugged Wingate and the slim, scented Greek was very striking. The captain of Greyfriars was showing the new fellow round the school.

"That's the gym," he was saying. "We're rather proud of our gym, here. I don't know whether you go in for gymnastics much."

"Not at all," said Ionides. "Gymnastics, I find, are a bore. I—"

It was at this moment that Wharton and Nugent kicked the ball. Their boots struck the ball together, and it flew up like a stone from a catapult, and then there was a terrific yell from Ionides.

"Oh! Yaroooooogh!"

"My—my hat!" gasped Nugent. "We've done it now."

"Goal!" shrieked Bob Cherry.

The leather had landed fairly on the Greek's chin, and he was bowled over like a ninepin.

He sat down in the Close, and, as misfortunes never come singly, he sat down in the very place where there was a big puddle.

There was a sounding splash.

It was followed by a wail of anguish from Ionides. He was not much hurt. But he was simply smothered with mud. There were splashes of muddy water on his dark face, and on his previously spotless collar.

He hardly knew what had happened for the moment, and he sat in the puddle, staring blankly. Harry Wharton ran up.

"I say, I'm awfully sorry!" he exclaimed. "It was quite an accident. Let me help you up."

He gave his hand to the Greek. Ionides staggered to his feet. But the dazed look was gone from his face, and a glare of fury replaced it. Effeminate and dandified Ionides might be, but there was a passionate Southern strain in his nature. His black eyes were blazing with rage. He turned upon Wharton like a tiger,

EFFEMINATE, A SCENTED FOP, AND A BULLY, THE NEW SIXTH FORMER IS SOON SHOWN BY THE REMOVE WHERE HE GETS OFF!

grasped him savagely, and commenced to strike him hard.

"Take that!" he hissed. "And that! I will teach you. It was done on purpose. Take that!"

Wharton was too surprised by the savage attack to resist for a moment. But he began to struggle furiously, and threw off the Greek. He faced the new Sixth Former angrily.

"Hands off, you bully!" he exclaimed. "What the dickens do you mean?"

Ionides snapped his white teeth.

"I will thrash you! I will—"

"Oh, hold on!" exclaimed Wingate, seizing the Greek by the arm. "We don't allow that sort of thing here, you know. You can't pitch into a junior like that."

"I—I'll thrash him!"

"Oh, don't be an ass! Cut off, Wharton!"

Wharton was breathing hard. He would not have been unwilling to take on the Greek, Sixth Former as he was. He thought he could, at least, have given a good account of himself in a tussle with the over-dressed, scented fop. But the captain of Greyfriars pushed him away.

"Cut off!" he said crisply.

"Oh, very well!" said Harry; and he walked away. Nugent picked up the ball and followed him. Bob Cherry chuckled as he joined them.

"Well, that's the new chap," he remarked. "What do you think of him?"

"I think he's a cad and a bully!" said Harry.

"Not far wrong, either. But did you ever see a chap dressed like that? And he uses scent—he reeks of it at a dozen yards' range."

"He'll have to learn to keep his paws off the Remove, or there'll be trouble for him at Greyfriars!" growled Wharton.

Bunter Wants a Feed!

"I SAY, you fellows!"

Billy Bunter, of the Greyfriars Remove, met Harry Wharton and his chums as they came in. There was a troubled expression on the fat face of William George Bunter.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! What the dickens is the trouble now? Have you lost a threepenny-bit, or has the fiat gone forth that you are to wash your neck of a morning—or what is it?" demanded Bob Cherry.

"Oh, really, Cherry, I don't know what's to be done—I'm in an awful fix."

The chums of the Remove stopped. Billy Bunter was their studymate, when they had a study. At present, like the rest of the Greyfriars Remove, they were in what Nugent described as a studyless condition.

There had been a fire at Greyfriars, on the first day of term, and the Remove had been burnt out. The dormitory and the row of studies tenanted by that lively Form had been reduced to ashes; and although the workmen were busy clearing the ruins away for the rebuilding to proceed, it was likely to be some time before the Removites had permanent quarters again.

The Remove felt it keenly. Several lumber rooms on the top floor had been cleared out to provide them with sleeping accommodation. Studies they could not have. They had to do their preparation in the Junior Common-room or the Form-room, and study feeds were a thing of the past. The Removites turned up to tea in Hall, greatly envious of the Upper Fourth,

who still had their studies and enjoyed private and cosy teas therein.

"It's about the study," went on Bunter. "I was thinking of getting up a feed this evening—we haven't had a feed for such a long time—and there's nowhere to cook it. I've asked Temple to let me cook it in his study."

"And what did he say?"

"Never mind what he said—it was something very rude. I can't cook it in an Upper Fourth study. Of course, it's no good asking the Shell or the Fifth. They'd take it as cheek."

"I shouldn't wonder."

"The difficulty is, what's to be done? I should think you fellows were getting ready for a decent meal, after having tea in Hall for three days running."

"Well, the tea in Hall isn't so bad," said Wharton, laughing. "But a cosy study feed would be all right, all the same. We could manage it. But what has happened? Is it raining cash, or has your celebrated postal order come?"

"I don't see why you should call it a celebrated postal order, as if there were only one," said Bunter peevishly. "I'm expecting a postal order. But about the feed—where can I cook it?"

"Ask Hoskins. He'd do anything for you if you'd listen to him playing the piano."

Bunter looked thoughtful.

"Well, yes, there's Hoskins. But if I manage to get round Hoskins, how about the feed?"

"Oh, we'll come!"

"Yes, but unfortunately my postal order has been a little delayed. I was thinking that you fellows might put up five bob each—"

"You will have to get a new thinker, old chap, and start again."

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"Seriously, it's not a bad wheeze," said Nugent. "We do want a study feed, you know, and if we could borrow a study to have it in—"

"Oh, we don't want to hold the feed in Hoskins' study," said Bunter quickly. "He would want to come, and all his friends. You know he has Mole, Maddison, and Turner in his study."

"Well, you ought to ask Hoskins, if you use his study."

"We'll have Hoskins himself, then. But, about the funds—I'm willing to do all the shopping."

"As you're so generous, Bunter, we can't do better than stand the tin," said Wharton, laughing. "Here's my five."

The juniors were pretty flush at the beginning of the term. The cash was forthcoming, and Bunter received it with great satisfaction.

"Of course, it's understood that I'm standing this feed," he remarked. "Shall I let you have this back out of my postal order when it comes, or put it down to the old account?"



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"Whichever you like," said Bob Cherry. "It amounts to the same thing, you know."

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"Buzz off, old chap, and let us know when the feed's ready."

And the chums of the Remove went in. They felt rather stranded without a study of their own to go to. They went into the Junior Common-room, which was pretty full. The weather was cold, and the football ground unplayable that afternoon.

In the Common-room there was a bright fire and comfortable chairs. Wun Lung and Hurree Jamset Ram Singh were playing chess on a table near the fireplace. Mark Linley, the Lancashire junior, was reading near them. Temple, Dabney & Co. of the Upper Fourth were discussing some matter apparently of great interest, to judge by their excited looks and tones.

"Catch me standing it!" said Temple heatedly.

"Oh, rather!" agreed Dabney.

"No fear!" chimed in Fry. "The chap's off his rocker!"

"Must be. Of course, it's all right to fag the Remove. The Remove were born to be fagged."

"But the Upper Fourth—well, my hat!"

"He's a giddy Greek, and I suppose he's a sort of fish out of water here. But we're not going to stand any of his bosh, I can tell him."

"Rather not!"

And Temple, Dabney & Co. looked very determined. Harry Wharton and his chums exchanged glances. The new fellow in the Sixth had evidently been getting on the wrong side of the Upper as well as the Lower Fourth.

"Did they want to fag him, then?" said Bob Cherry sympathetically. "And wouldn't he let them do it?"

Temple glared at him.

"Oh, you shut up!" he growled. "Catch us fagging! The Upper Fourth never fags. That's for the Remove and the Third!"

"Well, the Remove doesn't fag much," said Harry. "I've never fagged. But is it a fact that the Greek is trying to fag you?"

"Oh, rather!"

"Wanted me to fetch a bottle of Blinker's Patent Face Wash," said Temple. "Fancy me—captain of the Upper Fourth—going into a shop and asking for a bottle of face wash!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"It's no laughing matter. Of course, I didn't go!"

"And what did he say?"

"Blessed if I know—I haven't seen him since!"

"Phew! He'll come to look for you!"

"Let him!" said Temple recklessly. "I don't care! I'm not going to fag, and I'm not going to fetch face wash for anybody. Dandified mougher! Fancy a fellow of more'n seventeen being such a silly ass! Face wash, you know. I'm not going to fetch it! He can come and look for me if he likes! I'll tell him—"

Temple broke off suddenly.

A lithe form had appeared in the doorway, and a dark face looked into the room. It was the face of Heracles Ionides. And a sudden silence fell upon the juniors.

Handling the Bully!

IONIDES glanced over the crowd of juniors, not understanding the hush that had fallen upon the room. His eyes fell upon Temple, and he beckoned to him. The captain of the Upper Fourth did not stir.

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"Temple, come here! Have you fetched what I sent you for?"

"No," said Temple, drawing a deep breath. "You can't fag the Upper Fourth."

A very unpleasant expression came over the senior's face.

"Indeed! I am new to Greyfriars, but I asked Wingate, and he told me that all Forms below the Shell could be fagged," he said. "I think I can fag you, Temple, and I shall fag you! Are you going to the village?"

"No," said Temple. "If you asked me to fetch a football, or anything like that—but I wouldn't go into a shop and ask for face wash for the Head himself."

The Greek coloured a little.

"You will do as I tell you," he said, in a biting voice, "or you will suffer! Are you going?"

"No!" said Temple, without hesitation.

Ionides waited for no more. He grasped Temple and struck him savagely. There was a supple strength in the wiry Greek, and though Temple was a sturdy fellow, he had no chance. But Ionides had not to deal with him alone. In a second Dabney and Fry fastened on the senior, and he was dragged off.

"Easy does it!" said Dabney.

The Greek turned on the juniors like a tiger. The wave of passionate rage he had shown towards Wharton in the Close seemed to sweep over him. He struck out with clenched fist, and Dabney rolled under the table.

There was a cry of indignation from the juniors.

"Shame!"

Ionides took no notice of it. He was dealing a second crashing blow at Fry, when Harry Wharton sprang forward and struck up his arm. The Greek staggered with the force of his own blow as it met with no resistance. Temple gave him a shove at the right moment, and he went reeling to the floor.

His fall was the signal for a general rush.

The juniors, angry and indignant, simply piled on him, and Ionides disappeared under a heap of arms and legs.

He gasped hoarsely under the juniors, struggling wildly and uttering furious threats; but they had him down, and they meant to keep him there. Dabney crawled out from under the table, looking dazed.

"Let me up! Let me up!" shrieked Ionides, and a string of savage threats followed.

"What is all this?"

It was a cold, hard voice at the door. It sent a thrill through the juniors. Mr. Quelch, the master of the Remove, was looking in with glinting eyes.

The juniors scrambled off the Greek as if he had suddenly become red-hot.

"Is it possible that you have attacked a senior in this manner—and a new boy, too?" exclaimed Mr. Quelch angrily. "Ionides, I hope you are not hurt."

"I am hurt!"

"If you please, sir—" began Harry Wharton.

"Silence, Wharton!" said Mr. Quelch. "Every boy concerned in this disgraceful affair will take a hundred lines."

And Mr. Quelch marched off with a frowning brow. Ionides, too dusty and rumpled to think of pursuing the dispute with Temple any further, followed him. The juniors exchanged angry and rueful looks.

"That rotten bully!" said Bob Cherry. "I suppose it looked rather bad to Quelch, but it was all the rotter's own fault."

"Yes, rather!"

"The ratherfulness is terrific," murmured Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "I think we shall be upfully against the honourable rotter after this, my worthy chums."

"He will have to learn that he can't treat the juniors like this," said Harry Wharton. "Why, he's a worse beast than Carberry, and he's bad enough. It's the Remove up against Ionides, and I think we'll make him sing small."

The Greek had certainly made a bad start as far as the Lower Forms were concerned. But he cared little for that. His face was dark with rage as he made his way to his study. His room was next to Carberry's, and the latter was standing at his door as the new senior came along. He looked at him curiously.

"Been in the wars?" he grinned.

The Greek scowled, and swung past without a word. He went into his study and shut the door hard. Carberry chuckled.

In his room the Greek calmed down somewhat. He stopped before a large cheval glass and looked at his reflection there. Cheval glasses were not provided by Greyfriars for Sixth Formers. That and many other articles of furniture had been provided by Ionides at his own expense. The study was richly furnished compared with the rest of the Sixth Form passage.

Ionides was the son of a rich Greek resident in London, and he had an almost unlimited allowance. He spent his money with profusion, and in the twenty-four hours he had already been at Greyfriars, he had found friends among a set of fellows who were willing to put up with his airs for the sake of his hospitality.

Ionides looked in the glass and muttered something in Greek as he saw that one of his eyes was slightly discoloured. He stripped off his jacket and waistcoat and went to the washstand in the alcove beside the bed. The seniors at Greyfriars had bed-room and study in one, instead of sleeping in dormitories like the Lower Form boys.

Then an angry exclamation left his lips. There was no hot-water tap in the study, and Ionides did not like cold water. He went to the door and looked into the passage. Carberry was still standing at his door, and he grinned at his new Form-fellow.

"Where can I get some hot water?" asked the Greek.

"You look as if you have been in hot water already," grinned Carberry.

"I did not ask for jokes! I want hot water."

"Take your jug and go downstairs and ask the cook," said Carberry. "She may give you some if she feels like it."

"I cannot go down with the jug. It is absurd!"

"Go without, then."

Skinner of the Remove came along the passage, whistling, and Ionides turned and called to him.

"Here, boy! Fetch me some hot water."

Skinner stopped and stared at him. He did not feel inclined to refuse, and he felt still less inclined to go about Greyfriars with a jug searching for hot water. But Ionides was looking dangerous.

"Gimme the jug," said Skinner.

Ionides handed him the jug out of his room. Skinner took it and started along the passage. His foot slipped on the linoleum, and he went down with a bump. The jug smashed to fragments on the hard floor.

Skinner sat up, with an excellently simulated expression of dismay on his face.

"By George! Look there!"

"Oh, you fool!" exclaimed Ionides. "Find another jug."

Skinner scuttled off. The Greek waited impatiently, but Skinner did not return. Carberry was grinning. Ionides looked at him savagely.

"Why do you grin?" he asked. "Do you think that boy won't return?"

"Ha, ha, ha! I know he won't."

And Carberry went into his room and slammed the door, still grinning. He was right; Skinner did not return. Ionides waited for him for some minutes longer, and then went into his study with gleaming eyes. It was useless to go in search of an elusive junior who would certainly keep out of the way, and the Greek was forced to consume his own wrath. But he muttered threats in his own language that boded ill to Skinner and the rest of the Remove.

Bunter Suffers in Vain!

PONG, pang, pong, pang, pong!

Billy Bunter heard the sounds as he came along the Shell passage at Greyfriars, and his fat face brightened in expression. He had decided to take the advice of the chums of the Remove, and endeavour to soften the heart of Hoskins, and obtain the use of his study for cooking the feed. He had been shopping and the good things he had bought at Mrs. Mimbles's shop were stacked in a big bag, which he was carrying as he came down the passage. If Hoskins allowed him to cook in the study, all was serene.

Billy Bunter tapped at the door, but received no reply. Hoskins was pang-ponging away at the guitar, and had no ears for anything else. Bunter tapped again, and then opened the door without further ceremony, and walked in.

"I say, Hoskins—"

Hoskins was alone in the study. He looked up. He was sitting by the window, guitar and plectrum in hand, and playing away industriously. "Get out!" he said.

"I—I say, Hoskins! I was wondering if you'd play me something on the guitar," said Bunter meekly. "I should like to hear a sonata, or a symphony, or something."

Hoskins burst into a laugh. He hadn't a very well developed sense of humour—musicians like Hoskins seldom have—but the idea of a sonata or a symphony on a guitar struck him as funny.

"You young ass—"

"Well, you know, you play so rippingly," said Bunter. "I was thinking that if you'd play me something, Hoskins, I'd like you to come to a feed I'm standing to some of the Remove. We're having rabbit pie, beefsteak pudding, Christmas pudding, and mince pies, apples and oranges, and cakes and cream puffs."

"I'll come with pleasure," said the Shell junior.

"Good! The only thing is we should have to cook the things in your study, as ours has been burnt down, you know. I suppose you wouldn't mind us doing the cooking here, would you, Hoskins?"

"Oh, rats! I'm not going to have my study turned into a kitchen for a lot of Remove kids!" growled Hoskins. "Get out! I'm practising."

"You could play me something while I'm doing the cooking, and—"

"Well, it would do you good to hear some decent music," said Hoskins. "You don't care for it, though. I remember I offered to play you my latest sonata on Mr. Quelch's piano yesterday, and you wouldn't come."

"I—I hadn't thought then about cooking in your study—I—I mean I'm sorry. I was an ass and no mistake!" stammered Bunter. "I should like to hear you play a tune on that instrument."

"Well, I dare say it will improve your mind," said Hoskins. "Would you rather I played 'Old Man River,' or a little thing of my own?"

"I—I don't really mind which, Hoskins. Whichever you play, I'm pretty certain it will be ripping."

Hoskins made no reply. He took up the guitar, and began playing, with his eyes turned upwards towards the ceiling, and a far-away expression on his face.

Bunter watched him with awe and admiration in his looks. But he was a little puzzled as to which Hoskins was playing—"Old Man River," or the little thing of his own. As Hoskins was not looking at any music, he probably wasn't playing "Old Man River." It didn't sound like the tune Bunter remembered, either. The fat junior came to the conclusion that Hoskins was playing the little thing of his own, and when the Shell musician had finished, Bunter applauded heartily.

"My hat, Hosky! It's wonderful!"

"Well, I think I play the instrument rather well," said Hoskins.

"Yes; but fancy making all that up yourself, too," said Bunter.

Hoskins gave him a freezing stare.

"You ass! It was Kern wrote 'Old Man River,'" he said.

Bunter's heart sank. He was wrong, after all. In the confusion of the moment, he put his foot in it worse than ever.

"Was—was that 'Old Man River'?" he stammered.

"You shrieking idiot!" said Hoskins. "You don't understand anything about music. Get out, and let me do some practice."

"I—I say, Hoskins, I'd like to listen to you practising," said Bunter humbly. "It—it would improve my musical taste, you know."

"You can listen, if you like."

"Do you mind if I cook the feed while you practise?"

"You can cook, if you like."

"Thanks awfully! I wish I could play the guitar like that. It's a wonderful gift," said Bunter.

And he raked out the grate while Hoskins was pecking away at the guitar strings, and began to light the fire. He had just got the fire into a cheerful blaze, and was looking round for cooking utensils, when the door of the study was thrown open, and three big Shell fellows rushed in.

"Hallo!" exclaimed Maddison. "Shut up that fearful row, Hosky, old chap! I've got an impot to do."

"What's that Remove kid doing here?" demanded Turner.

Bunter blinked at the intruders.

"I—I say, you fellows, I'm going to do some cooking here—"

"Rats!" said Maddison promptly. "You're not!"

"But Hoskins said—"

"Hang Hoskins! Get out! Catch us letting a fat young Remove porker use our study to cook in! Travel!"

"But I—"

"Outside!"

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Mole, Maddison, and Turner grasped the unfortunate Bunter and whirled him to the door, vainly protesting.

"I—I say, you fellows, hold on! I'm sorry, but you see— Ow! I tell you—I'm going! Ow! Wow!"

With a final whirl, Bunter went staggering into the passage. The Shell fellows stood in the door, laughing. Bunter blinked at them with boiling indignation.

"You beasts!" he roared. "Gimme my bag, then!"

"Hallo! That's his bag!" said Maddison. "Let him have it!"

The bag of good things was slung out of the study. It caught Bunter on the chest. The bag was heavy, and Bunter went staggering, and sat down with great violence.

"Ow! Wow!"

He sat there dazed for some moments, and then slowly picked up himself and the bag, and drifted away. And the Shell fellows stood roaring with laughter as he departed.

A Cook in Trouble!

"HALLO, hallo, hallo! What's the matter, Bunt?"

Bob Cherry asked the question. Billy Bunter was sitting on a big bag in the passage, looking very dishevelled, and gasping for breath. He blinked up at Bob Cherry with an exasperated expression.

"I've been swindled!" he grunted.

"Ha, ha! How's that?"

"I listened to Hoskins making a fearful row, and then Maddison and the other rotters came in and slung me out just as I was beginning to get to work."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blessed if I can see anything to cackle at! It's rotten lugging this heavy bag all over Greyfriars, and never finding a place to cook the grub."

"Better look out for some chap who's gone out for the evening, and use his study while he's gone," grinned Bob Cherry; and he walked away.

The words gave Bunter food for thought. Bob had been joking, but it struck the fat junior as a good idea. He was thinking it over when Heracles Ionides, the new Sixth Former, came by, with his hat and coat on. Ionides looked very well dressed. His coat was a fashionable cut, with the slimmest of the waist carried to a point of exaggeration, and his hat was a shining topper with the very latest brim.

He did not even glance at Bunter—a Removeite being miles beneath his lordly notice. He stopped for a moment to speak to Bland of the Fifth, who was in the passage.

"It's straight along the lane to Friardale, I think?" he said.

Bland nodded.

"Yes, that's it. Or there's a short cut through the wood, over the stile."

"Thank you!"

And Ionides went out. Bunter blinked after him thoughtfully. If Ionides was going to the village, he could not possibly be back in under half an hour, and would probably be much longer.

It would be an unparalleled nerve on the part of a junior to make use of a Sixth Former's study while he was gone out. But Bunter was growing desperate. To have all the materials

of a ripping feed in the bag, and to be unable to cook them, was distinctly exasperating.

Bunter rose to his feet. Several juniors were passing, and one of them called out to Billy Bunter. It was Linley.

"Coming in to tea, Bunter?"

Billy Bunter hesitated.

Tea was ready in Hall, and most of the fellows were going in. The fat junior was anxious to get to work in Ionides' study, but it seemed reckless to miss a meal while he had a chance. So he left the bag in a safe place, and followed the Form into the dining-room.

"What about that feed?" demanded Nugent, as he came in.

"I've got it in the bag," said Bunter. "I'm afraid some of the eggs are broken, but the rest is all right, as soon as I get a chance to cook it. One of you fellows might go and get the box-room ready after tea. I wish there was a fire-grate there; I'd try to do the cooking on it. But I think it will be all right. I'll see about it directly after tea."

"I think I'll make a good tea, in case of accidents," grinned Bob Cherry.

"The carefulness would be only prudent, as the accidentfulness might be terrific," remarked the Nabob of Bhanipur.

And the Removites had their tea in Hall. The school tea was a very plain meal in itself, but the juniors were allowed to take in little luxuries they fancied and could afford.

After tea, which he finished as early as possible, Billy Bunter returned for his bag, and made his way to Ionides' study. Half an hour had very nearly elapsed since the Greek had gone out, but Bunter reflected that he was scarcely likely to go straight to the village and back. He might be away till nine or ten o'clock, as a matter of fact. The fat junior hoped for the best.

Several Sixth Formers saw him going into the study, but they naturally imagined that he was fagging for Ionides, and did not think of interfering with him. Bunter had not been in the study since Ionides came, and he was struck by what met his view as he turned on the light.

"My hat!" he murmured. "This is ripping!"

The fire was still burning, and Bunter had only to rale it together and replenish it. He glanced round at the furniture of the room. Heavy crimson curtains shut off the alcove where the bed and washstand were, so that the study itself looked like a cosy sitting-room. The big glass, the couple of comfortable easy-chairs, the cabinet, and writing-table were striking enough in a school study, as well as the square of carpet, which could not have cost less than five or six guineas.

"He must have spent a lot of tin on this," murmured Bunter. "He seems to have forgotten to lay in any cooking things, though. There isn't even a kettle here. I shall have to get them out of another study, I suppose."

And he did. He borrowed a saucepan from one study, a frying-pan from another, and a knife and fork from a third. Then he set to work.

Bunter was an old hand at frying sausages and bacon. A savoury odour was soon rising from the grate. As for the eggs, he was saved the trouble of breaking them, as nearly all of them were broken already in the concussion when Maddison and the other Shell fellows had ejected him and his bag from Hoskins' study.

Bunter forgot everything in the delight of cooking. He had some things to cook and some things

to warm up. Then they had to be carefully conveyed to the box-room, where the feed was to take place. The old box-room usually favoured by juniors on such occasions had perished in the late fire, but there was another room near the Fifth Form quarters just as good. The scent of frying bacon cheered Bunter.

"It's ripping!" he murmured. "I shall be finished here in ten minutes, and if only Ionides doesn't come back till I'm safe out it's all serene. I wish the other fellows would come and lend me a hand in getting the things to the box-room!"

There was the sound of the door opening, and someone stepped in. Bunter had just taken the frying-pan from the fire, and he turned round with it in his hand and blinked at the newcomer.

"I say, Wharton, is that you—"



The football landed fairly on Ionides' chin and he sat down in the Close. Misfortunes never come singly, and the new Sixth Former sat down in the very place where there was a big puddle!

"What is this? What—what are you doing in my study?"

It was the voice of Ionides, and Bunter gave a gasp. A stream of grease poured from the frying-pan upon the carpet as the fat junior stood transfixed.

Rough Justice!

IONIDES stared at Bunter. The Greek seemed dumbfounded. The melted butter and bacon fat in the pan was pouring over the side in a hissing stream upon the expensive carpet and forming a greasy pool there. In his terror, Bunter never even noticed it.

"Boy, how dare you! What are you doing here?"

"It's all right!" stammered Billy Bunter. "I didn't know you would come back so early—I—I mean, I thought you wouldn't mind. You see, THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,561.

since our studies were—were burnt down, I haven't—you see—"

"You fool! You're spoiling my carpet! Can't you see what you're doing?" roared Ionides.

Bunter started.

"I—I'm sorry!"

Most of the grease was spilt now. Bunter jammed the frying-pan back on the hob. Ionides, pale with rage, dashed straight at him.

"You—you young villain! I'll teach you!"

"Ow!" roared Bunter. "Hellup! I don't mean any harm, and you can come to the feed in the box-room, if you like!"

Thump! Thump! Thump!

"Ow, ow, ow!"

Thump! Thump!

"Ow! Murder! Help! Fire!"

Bunter shrieked and yelled. He was in a bad case this time. The Greek, in his passionate rage, seemed to have completely lost control of himself. He wrenched Bunter over and flung him across a table, and thrashed him brutally with his walking-cane. It was a more severe punishment than the most severe flogging ever administered by Dr. Locke, and it was no wonder that the fat junior squirmed and shrieked with pain.

There was a sound of footsteps in the passage. The door of the study was flung open, and Harry Wharton looked in.

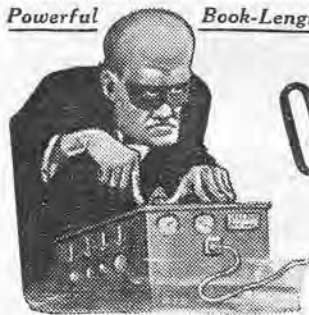
The captain of the Remove had been passing at the end of the passage when he heard Bunter's cries, and he had realised that something serious was the matter.

Wharton gave one look at the infuriated Greek, and then sprang forward.

"You bully! Stop that!"

Ionides took no notice. He lashed away furiously.

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Bunter squirmed and yelled. Wharton grasped Ionides' arm and wrenched it back.

The Greek turned on him like a tiger. The cane whistled through the air, and descended upon Wharton's head, and the junior reeled back, half-stunned.

But in that moment when Ionides' attention was taken off, brief as it was, Bunter squirmed off the table and darted out of the study.

Wharton staggered against the mantelpiece, which he grasped for support. He was dazed and confused by the cowardly blow.

"You brute!" he gasped. "You—you bully!"

The Greek gritted his teeth and lashed at him again with the cane. Wharton caught the blow on his arm, and then closed with Heracles Ionides.

In spite of his name, the Greek was no Hercules, and the strong and wiry Removite was a dangerous adversary even for the Sixth Former. But size and age were bound to tell. The junior was forced back and back till he was down, with the savage face of the Greek bending over him.

Then Ionides grasped the cane again, and a savage shower of blows descended on the junior. But just then there was the sound of a regular stampee in the passage. Bunter had carried the news, and the chums of the Remove were coming to the rescue. Bob Cherry, Frank Nugent, and Hurree Singh dashed into the study, and they threw themselves upon Ionides.

In a twinkling he was dragged off and bumped on the carpet, and Bob Cherry gave Wharton a hand to rise. Bob looked anxiously at his chum.

"The beast!" he exclaimed wrathfully. "He has hurt you. By gum, we'll make him smart!"

"Let me up!" hissed Ionides. "Let me go!"

"So we will when we've done with you," said Nugent, between his teeth. "There isn't a Form-master to interfere now. Lock the door, Inky!"

"The lockfulness is the wheezy good idea."

The key clicked in the lock. The Greek struggled furiously in the grasp of the juniors. But he was no match for three of them, and Wharton was ready to lend a hand now. The captain of the Remove was recovering himself a little.

"Hold the cad!" he said. "Sixth Former, or not, he's going to have a lesson. If he makes a row, jam something in his mouth."

Ionides was shrieking for help, and Bob Cherry immediately carried out Wharton's instructions. He jammed a couple of sausages into Ionides' mouth, and the shrieks died away in a suffocated splutter.

"Gr-r-r-r!"

There was a knock at the door.

"What's the matter here?"

It was the voice of Carberry, the prefect.

"Don't answer," muttered Harry. "Not a word!"

They grasped the struggling Greek and held him fast, but said no word.

"If you make that row when I'm trying to work, I'll come in and ram your scent bottles down your neck!" roared Carberry.

And the prefect stamped away.

The juniors chuckled softly. Carberry was evidently under the impression that Ionides was responsible for the disturbance in the study.

"He's gone!" muttered Nugent.

"The gonefulness is great."

"Now to deal with this rotter!"

"Gr-r-r-r!"

"What a row he's making." He doesn't seem to like sausages. Ladle out the frying-pan on his topknot."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Those smashed eggs will do for his collar."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"And the jam under his chin."

The juniors shrieked with laughter as they proceeded to adorn the Greek with a goodly quantity of the provisions laid in by Bunter for the feed.

Ionides' struggles were useless.

He was breathless and exhausted now: his resistance was only feeble, and the vengeful juniors gave him his punishment with unsparing hands.

Bacon-fat, jam, marmalade, and broken eggs squashed all over him, and the dandified and scented Greek was a squirming mass of horror in a few minutes.

Bob Cherry cocked his eye at him thoughtfully.

"I think he'll do," he remarked.

"Ha, ha, ha! Rather!"

"Will you behave yourself in future if we let you off lightly?"

"Gr-r-r-r!"

"I can't understand him. I suppose he's talking Greek. Are you talking Greek, Ionides?"

"Gr-r-r-r!"

"Oh, I give it up! Come on, you chaps!"

The juniors unlocked the door, quitted the study, and slammed the door after them. The slam brought Carberry out of his study with a howl, but the juniors had disappeared round the nearest corner. Carberry was trying to work out a problem which required all his mental powers, and the continual disturbances in the next study naturally exasperated him. The violent slam of the door was the last straw, and he rushed out of his study with a howl of fury.

He thumped on the Greek's door, and at the same moment it was thrown open by Heracles Ionides, who had sprung up to rush in pursuit of the juniors.

The two Sixth Formers met face to face, and almost ran into one another. Carberry was about to burst into a torrent of abuse when he saw Ionides' face, and he started back in amazement.

"What the—who the——"

THE WRECKERS!

(Continued from page 27.)

"Yaas, I am weally sowwy to twouble you, deah boy; but, you see——"

"No trouble at all!" said Lumley. "Go ahead! Precious few things of Levison's here, though; only that desk and inkstand."

"Bai Jove!"

Crash, crash!

The desk and the inkstand were soon reduced to fragments, Levison looking on savagely and sullenly.

"That's not enough!" growled Herries.

"I guess it's no good smashing my props!" grinned Lumley-Lumley. "Keep away from that bookcase, you ass! That's mine! So is the clock!"

"Then we shall have to take it out of Levison," said Blake. "Collar the cad!"

The black sheep of the Fourth was promptly collared. Blake and Arthur Augustus took hold of his arms, and Digby and Herries gripped his ankles. Then Levison was swung off his feet and bumped on the floor—hard!

He had no time to finish. Ionides was rushing furiously out, and he knocked the prefect flying. Carberry staggered against a wall, and the Greek rushed on in pursuit of the juniors.

Round the corner he went, and ran into two or three fellows. It was dusky in the passage, and the Greek was in a tearing passion, and not in the mood to be careful. As he ran into them he began to hit out right and left.

"Take that—and that—and that——"

"Hallo!" roared Blundell of the Fifth. "What the dickens are you up to? Is the silly cuckoo off his silly rocker?"

"Hold him!" yelled Bland.

"Collar the brute!"

"Ow! He's sticky!"

And the group of Fifth Formers promptly let the Greek alone.

"The beastly rotter! He's smothered with something sticky!" growled Blundell. "Keep away from him!"

"I—I'm sorry! A mistake!" panted the Greek.

"I was looking for some juniors who have been in my study. Have you seen them?"

"Oh, go and wash yourself!" said Blundell.

And the Fifth Formers walked away.

And as there wasn't much chance of finding the Removites just then, the Greek made his way back to his own quarters. He might have run the juniors to earth in the Common-room, but after his previous experience there he was not inclined to penetrate into the stronghold of the juniors.

Harry Wharton & Co. arrived there rather breathless, but laughing. Harry still felt the lashes of the Greek's cane, but he was satisfied with the rough justice that had been meted out to the bully.

The whole Remove and Upper Fourth roared over the story when it was told. Billy Bunter was the only one who didn't laugh. He tried to make his voice heard, but for some time he couldn't get a hearing. At last he dragged at Harry's sleeve and forced him to listen.

"I say, Wharton, I suppose you brought away the grub?"

"What grub?" asked Harry.

"The grub I took to Ionides' study."

His yells rang through the study as he was bumped again and again. By the time Blake & Co. had finished with him, Levison had an ache in every bone in his back.

"I think we're about done here," said Jack Blake. "Come on!"

And the avengers departed, satisfied.

Levison sat up on the floor, groaning.

He was far from satisfied, but most certainly he had had enough.

The wreckers had been discovered and adequately punished. But there still remained a problem before the chums of Study No. 6, and that was the refurnishing of the study. That was a difficult problem to tackle. But there was one consolation—when at last Study No. 6 should resume its pristine glory, there would be no danger of another "wreck." Much as Blake & Co. deplored the wreck of the study, they did not deplore it so deeply and fervently as the wreckers!

(Next Wednesday: "GUSSY SAYS 'NO!'"—an exciting long yarn of thrills, fun and footer. Look out for it, chums—but don't forget to order early.)

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"Blessed if I thought of it."

Bunter gave a howl.

"You never thought of it! You didn't think of the grub!"

"Well; it wasn't of much use after the frying-pan had been upset, and we used all the grease and most of the bacon to lather Ionides' chivvy."

"Yes; but most of the grub was in the bag—sausages, rabbit pie, beefsteak pudding, cake, Christmas pudding, and—"

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"Never thought of it, my son. We didn't bring it away."

Billy Bunter sat down in a state of collapse. The licking he had had from the Greek was bad enough. But now it had come to the worst. The whole feed was lost!

(Poor old Bunter! A good feed gone west! But next week the bullying Greek is made to look very small. Don't miss the fun—it's a scream.)

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