

YOU WANT THE BEST SCHOOL STORIES? THEY'RE WITHIN!

The GEM

2^d

IN THIS ISSUE

THE BOY FROM
SOUTH AFRICA!

By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

THE PIRATES OF PEGG!

By FRANK RICHARDS.

and

OTHER POPULAR
FEATURES.



The LAUGH'S
on the NEW BOY!



HOW'S YOUR LUCK THIS WEEK?

Read what the stars foretell,
by PROFESSOR ZARRO.

HERE is this week's forecast for every GEM reader. It covers the period Wednesday, March 30th, to Tuesday, April 5th. Look in the section in which your birthday falls, and see what the next seven days hold in store for you.

January 21st to February 19th.—An interesting week for you Aquarius-born fellows. There's a mystery ahead for you, though what form it will take is not indicated. It will probably hinge round a secret meeting. Monday is a red-letter day, bringing success in tackling a problem that has been baffling you. If you encounter trouble, don't keep it to yourself.

February 20th to March 21st.—Luck—and in an important matter—makes the mid-week memorable. Your best times will be those spent at home. The only trouble you are likely to encounter seems to be the risk of being let down by a friend. Sunday brings help from an adult.

March 22nd to April 20th.—Be careful to avoid "rows" with teachers and employers, and the week will be a happy one. New ideas prosper, though the one you think most important will probably peter out to nothing. Later, when you see what it might have led to, you'll be glad this plan came to nothing. You benefit from something to do with writing.

April 21st to May 21st.—You are almost certain to get a "leg-up" in the world this week. You may be made monitor at school, promoted to captain of your footer team, or given a better job at work—the "leg-up" might be anything, in fact, but it will be there. Guard against rashness early in the week, and don't bank too much on luck helping you out of scrapes.

May 22nd to June 21st.—An exciting week is indicated, but whether you'll enjoy all the coming "adventures" or not is another matter. Money luck is promised. The best advice you can have is not to worry; the end of the week will see you through your present difficulties.

June 22nd to July 23rd.—Don't brood over past bad luck, or you'll miss the good times coming to you. Push ahead in your ambitions, and, through the help of your true friends, you'll make quicker progress than

you've been anticipating. Saturday promises to be a day you'll enjoy to the full.

July 24th to August 23rd.—Money matters play a big part in your affairs this week. If you've got full pockets, you are likely to be annoyed by spongers of the Trimble kidney. If you're hard-up, you may be disappointed at not being able to join in all the fun that's going. There's a big slice of unexpected good luck coming your way next Monday or Tuesday, however.

August 24th to September 23rd.—A week when you'll laugh a lot, and everything in the garden will be lovely! The best luck of the week will be in the way things turn out so much better than you anticipate. All sports are especially favoured. Make this an active week.

September 24th to October 23rd.—There are strange influences at work for the next seven days. It seems probable that you may be called upon to own up about something you've done, to save someone else getting blamed for it. Don't worry if you seem to be wasting your efforts; they lead to unexpected good fortune in the near future.

October 24th to November 22nd.—If you've been through a rather boring time, now's the period you come "back to life" with a bang again! A secret entrusted you by someone puts you in a quandary. Say nothing about it, and everything will turn out happily. Great help comes to you from a friend or relative, maybe with the accompaniment of a present.

November 23rd to December 22nd.—A slowing-up in your affairs is only the beginning of a big matter which deeply concerns and interests you. It brings good fortune, chiefly by realising a plan you have long cherished. Danger of a "ticking off" from someone above you; don't let it get you down.

December 23rd to January 20th.—Definitely the best luck of the week is for you Capricorn-born folk. Go cautiously, though, when you see the luck coming your way, and still more will come to you. You'll appreciate the real friendship of your acquaintances, and it is probably through those friends that your big opportunity comes to you.

BIRTHDAY INDICATIONS.

WEDNESDAY, March 30th.—A year full of opportunities, waiting only for you to exploit them. A pleasant surprise regarding money comes early in the year. There is every chance that you will change your home shortly. Travel is indicated.

THURSDAY, March 31st.—All sorts of changes will take place in the next twelve months—some for the better, some unfavourable. Don't let discontent over the latter kind spoil your year; the luck breaks strongly in your favour in the autumn.

FRIDAY, April 1st.—This may be April Fool's Day, but there's no fooling when I say you've got the happiest year of your life coming to you. This birthday is, in fact, easily the luckiest of the week. The keynote of achievement in sport and work, even though you have never shone much in either before. The year ends more quietly than it begins.

SATURDAY, April 2nd.—Ups and downs are in the air for you this year. Take them as they come, and you'll have no cause to be disappointed when your next birthday arrives. December, and especially Christmas-time, will prove your luckiest

period. Expect a reward for work you have done, or, if at work, a rise in pay.

SUNDAY, April 3rd.—Don't make changes during this coming year just for the sake of "something different," but by all means take a chance when it comes to you to get out of the rut. It's rather a muddled year on the whole, but you'll get through it without serious misfortune. Make decisions promptly.

MONDAY, April 4th.—A disappointment at school or work is compensated by good luck in spare-time or sporting matters. You are going to meet many new friends, but, through changes you can't control, are likely to lose touch with your present pals.

TUESDAY, April 5th.—Make the most of your good luck at the beginning of the year, when it falls thick and fast, for later you will find the months become rather quiet and uneventful. Small matters become suddenly important. Money luck is excellent for the whole of the coming twelve months. Best times arrive in June and July.

THE AFRIKANDER WHO MAKES ST. JIM'S SIT UP AND TAKE NOTICE!

BE! The Boy from SOUTH AFRICA!



"Them young lads belong to the Grammar School," said old Trumble. "You look out, sir; and if you don't go straight down the road to St. Jim's you'll know it's a lark." "Oh!" said Clive. "Thank you!"

CHAPTER 1. Backed Up!

"IN the cirs—"

"Where's my footer boots?"

"I wepeat, Blake, in the cirs—"

"Don't repeat it, old chap!" said Blake appealingly. "Just tell me where my footer boots are, and that will do."

"I wufuse to take the slightest intwest in your boots, Blake!" said D'Arcy of the Fourth frigidly. "In the cirs, we are not goin' to play footah this aftahnoon."

"Not going to play footer?" repeated Blake.

Blake, Herries, and Digby stared at Arthur Augustus.

"Certainly not!"

"Fathead!"

"There's somethin' wathah more important than footah this aftahnoon!"

"Are you going to buy a new toppah?" asked Dig.

"Weally, Dig—"

"Or is it new neckties?" inquired Blake. "If it is, we're sorry, but you'll have to do it on your lonely own! We're going to footer practice."

"Weally, Blake—"

"Haven't we got to beat Figgins & Co. in the House match next week?" demanded Blake. "Do you want the New House to walk over the School House? And what will become of the side if this study chucks footer practice?"

"That is vewy twee. But—"

"Never mind butting! Come along!"

"I wufuse to come along! In the cirs—"

"Oh, here's my boots!" said Blake.

"Will you listen to me, Blake?"

"No fear! Tom Merry's waiting for us on Little Side."

"Tom Mewwy can wait!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy calmly.

"There is somethin' much more important than footah pwactice this aftahnoon. A new fellow is comin'—"

"Let him come!"

"The new chap is awwivin' this aftahnoon on eithah Wylcombe or Wayland—I weally do not know which—"

"Let him arrive!" said Blake.

"It doesn't matter twopence where he arrives, when he arrives, or whether he arrives at all."

"Pway don't be an ass, Blake, if you can weally help it!"

"Bother the new chap!"

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,572.

By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

Sidney Clive, a newcomer from South Africa, is "all there" when it comes to japing and using his fists—as certain St. Jim's fellows soon discover!

"His name is Sidney Clive."

"I don't care a Continental red cent whether his name is Smith or Jones or Robinson! Get out of the way, Gussy!"

"I weseuse to get out of the way! This new chap—"

"Blow the new chap!" shrieked Blake. "I'm fed-up with the new chap!"

"He is comin' this aftahnoon fwom South Afwica—"

"Rats! He couldn't do it in one afternoon!"

"You uttah ass! I mean he awwives this aftahnoon, aftah comin' fwom South Afwica. He is an Afwikandah. Kildare says he was met in London, and will be put in the twain for St. Jim's by a lawyah chap, and he will awwife here alone. In the cires, as he is a Colonial, and a chap fwom a gweat Dominion, it is up to us to give him watah a weception!"

"Oh, I see!"

"I am weally glad that you see at last, Blake! You are watah obtuse. In the cires, we are goin' to miss footah pwactice, and go to the station in a body—"

"Whose body?"

"In a party, I mean, and gweet him. We are bound to give an Afwikandah a hearty weception."

"Hear, hear! Ask him to tea from me!" said Blake. "Tell him we've got a sardine left from the day before yesterday, and he can have it! Good-bye!"

"Weally, Blake—"

Jack Blake took his elegant chum by the shoulders and twisted him gently to one side. Then he hurried out of the study.

"Bai Jove! You uttah wuffian!" gasped D'Arcy. "I say, Dig—"

But Digby had followed Blake.

"Hewwies, deah boy, I suppose you are goin' to back me up in gweetin' the new kid fwom South Afwica in pwopah style?"

Herries chuckled.

"Right-ho! I'll back you up!"

"Vewy good! Gwoogh! You uttah ass! Leggo!" yelled Arthur Augustus, as the burly Herries seized him and backed him up against the wall of the study with a tremendous bump. "Gweat Scott! Gwoogh! Welease me! Wow-ow!"

Herries released his noble chum suddenly, and Arthur Augustus sat down on the floor.

Herries ran out of the study, laughing, leaving Arthur Augustus to pick himself up at his leisure. D'Arcy scrambled to his feet.

"Gwoogh! You uttah wottah! Gwoogh! Come back, you feahful boundah, and I will give you a feahful thwashin'! Gwoogh!"

But Herries was gone.

CHAPTER 2.

Disastrous for D'Arcy!

ARTHUR AUGUSTUS D'ARCY wore a frown upon his noble face when he came out of the School House a little later.

Otherwise, everything he wore was in a state of perfection.

Arthur Augustus felt that it was up to him to greet the new boy from South Africa in proper style, and the swell of St. Jim's had dressed for the occasion.

From the crown of his head to the soles of his feet he was a thing of beauty and a joy for ever.

It was a bright, sunny afternoon, and most of the St. Jim's fellows were enjoying the half-holiday.

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,572

Big and Little Side were crowded, and there were swarms of fellows along the towing-path and out on the river.

Nobody seemed inclined to accompany Arthur Augustus, however, upon his mission of politeness.

Julian of the Fourth, Kerruish, and Reilly were starting on a boating excursion, and couldn't go. Kangaroo of the Shell agreed that St. Jim's ought to feel considerably "bucked" at getting another Colonial within its ancient walls, but he himself was busy with footer, and couldn't go.

Tom Merry & Co., and Talbot also, pleaded the same excuse. In fact, excellent as Gussy's idea undoubtedly was, there seemed to be no backers. So he walked down to the gates, and started down the lane to Rylcombe, alone in his glory.

After all, he felt that if the reception of the South African was to be a solo performance, he was the fellow best fitted to carry it out.

Three youths were seated on the stile in the lane, and they grinned at the sight of the resplendent Gussy.

Arthur Augustus paused in alarm as he recognised Gordon Gay, Monk, and Wootton major of Rylcombe Grammar School. He knew the humorous proclivities of the cheerful Grammarians.

Gordon Gay & Co. slipped off the stile at once.

"Bai Jove!" murmured Arthur Augustus. "Those howwid boundahs are lookin' for a wag!"

The three Grammarians bore down upon him merrily.

The ditch at the side of the lane was spanned by a plank bridge. Arthur Augustus felt that it was time for a strategic retreat. He jumped on the plank, to cut away across the fields.

"Look out!" yelled Gordon Gay. "That plank isn't safe."

But the warning came too late.

Arthur Augustus was on the plank; but he was only on it for a second. The next moment it slipped, and there was a yell:

"Yawwoh!"

Splash!

The ditch was deep, and flowing full.

Arthur Augustus disappeared for a moment. His head came up, spluttering and gasping.

"Gwoogh! Help!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Wescue! Yawwoh!"

The Grammarians rushed to the rescue. They reached over and grasped D'Arcy's hands, and yanked him out of the ditch.

Arthur Augustus sprawled in the road, spluttering.

He was drenched to the skin, smothered with mud, and in a terrible state of dilapidation from head to foot.

The Grammarians tried to look sympathetic, but they couldn't. They roared.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You uttah asses!" gasped Arthur Augustus.

"Sorry!" chuckled Gordon Gay. "I told you the plank wasn't safe."

"Gwoogh! It was all your fault. How can I go and meet a new chap in this state?"

"Ha, ha, ha! It would surprise him!" yelled Wootton.

"Ripping!" chuckled Monk. "Go just as you are, Gussy. It will give the new chap an idea of what St. Jim's fellows are like."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh dear! I shall catch cold! Atchoo—choo!" Arthur Augustus began to sneeze.

"You'd better cut off home, or you'll catch cold, and no mistake!" said Gordon Gay.

"We'll meet the new chap for you, if you like, and tell him you've had an accident."

"Bai Jove! Will you really?"

"Certainly! What's his name?"

"Sidney Clive. He's comin' to Wylcombe Station, I undahstand."

"Rely on us," said Gordon Gay, winking at his chums. "We'll meet him, and give him a splendid reception. You cut off and get a change. You need it."

"Thank you vewy much, Gay!"

"Oh, don't mensh!"

The unhappy swell of St. Jim's started at a run for the school. He was already sneezing, and looked as if he were booked for a severe cold.

Wootton major and Monk looked curiously at Gordon Gay.

"Well, what's the little game?" asked Monk. Gay chuckled.

"We're going to meet the new St. Jim's chap. We'll hire Farmer Oakes' pony-cart, and take him in it—to the Grammar School."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Then we'll dress him up, and paint his chivvy, and send him home," said Gordon Gay. "It will please the Saints to see a new chap arriving like that—I don't think! It will show 'em that the Grammar School's on the warpath. Come on, my infants!"

The three grinning Grammarians started for the station.

Sidney Clive, of South Africa, was sure of a "reception" now; but it was not to be exactly the kind of reception the Honourable Arthur Augustus had planned.

CHAPTER 3.

The Afrikaner!

SIDNEY CLIVE stepped from the train in the little station of Rylcombe. He was a sturdy, sunburnt lad of about fifteen, with a pair of very keen but very pleasant and good-humoured blue eyes.

He glanced about him, and gave the porter directions to take his box, apparently feeling quite at home in his new surroundings.

Three smiling youths bore down on him on the platform. They raised their caps as if moved by the same spring.

"Your name Clive?"

"New chap for St. Jim's?"

Clive nodded.

"Yes," he said.

"We've come to meet you," said Gordon Gay agreeably. "D'Arcy of the Fourth was coming, but he's met with an accident—caught a cold, I fancy. Jolly glad to make your acquaintance, Clive!"

"You're very good," said the South African. "I didn't expect anybody to meet me here."

"We're nuts on new boys," explained Wootton major solemnly. "It's a real pleasure to us. We've got a pony-cart outside to take you to the school. Tell the porter to put your box in it."

"Thank you very much!"

"Not at all."

Sidney Clive ran after the porter, who was trundling the box away on a trolley.

"Put the box in the pony-cart outside, porter," he said. "These chaps have brought it to meet me."

Old Trumble looked at him.

"You're going to St. Jim's, sir?" he asked.

"Yes."

Trumble grinned. He liked the handsome, frank face of the new boy for St. Jim's, and he decided to give him a tip.

"Don't say I told you, sir. Them young lads belong to the Grammar School," he whispered.

Clive looked surprised.

"Then it's jolly decent of them to come and meet me."

Trumble chuckled.

"Yes; if it ain't a lark," he said. "You look out, sir, and if the pony-cart don't go straight down the road to St. Jim's, you'll know it's a lark."

"Oh!" said Clive.

He was new to the place—quite new to school ways—but he was no fool. He glanced back along the platform, and noted that the three Grammarians were grinning together.

A twinkle came into his eyes. He was on his guard.

"Thank you!" he said.

Trumble bundled the box into the pony-cart, and Clive slipped a shilling into his horny hand.

Gordon Gay & Co. sauntered out of the station.



"I don't know what the time is, sir, but the hands is like this 'ere."

Half-a-crown has been awarded to M. Foran, St. Mary's School, Bodmin, Cornwall.

"Here we are again!" said Gay. "Tumble in! We'll have you at the school in two jiffies, Clive!"

"At St. Jim's, you mean?" asked Clive.

"Jump in!" said Gay, apparently not hearing the question—a fact that Clive noticed at once. But he made no sign.

The four juniors entered the pony-cart, Gay taking the reins, and the vehicle bowled out of the village into the lane.

At the cross-roads, where the turning lay to the Grammar School, there was a signpost: "To Rylcombe Grammar School."

Gay turned the corner.

"Isn't the straight road to St. Jim's?" asked Clive.

"You leave it to us," said Wootton major. "New kids shouldn't ask questions. You'll get to St. Jim's all right to-day."

Clive smiled.

He was seated at the back of the cart. As the vehicle bumped over the rough and rutty road, he made a sudden lurch and dropped out. He landed on his feet, and rolled over at once.

"Hallo! Stop!" shouted Monk. "The young ass has fallen out!"

Gordon Gay pulled in the horse.

"Come on, Clive!" shouted Monk.

Clive did not move. He lay stretched in the road, without motion.

CHAPTER 4.

Clive's First Day at St. Jim's!

"NEW boy?"
 "Yes."
 "Which House?"

Sidney Clive looked puzzled at the question. It was his first day at St. Jim's. He had just put his head into the gymnasium when half a dozen fellows spotted him and surrounded him at once.

The one who addressed him was a lad of about his own age, long-legged and lithe, with a freckled face. It was Figgins of the Fourth.

The group of boys seemed to wait for Clive's answer to Figgins' question with a great deal of interest.

"I don't understand—" began Clive.

"I mean, which House are you going to enter? I s'pose you know there are two Houses—School and New?"

Clive's expression brightened.

"Oh, I see! I am going into the School House."

Instantly the half-dozen groaned in chorus.

Clive looked at them in amazement. He knew nothing of the manners and customs of St. Jim's, and he was totally at a loss to account for his strange reception.

"Better teach him manners to begin with, Figgys!" said Kerr of the Fourth. "I vote that we frogmarch him round the gym."

Figgins nodded cheerfully.

"That's a jolly good idea, Kerr. Collar him, chaps!"

And the New House juniors rushed to seize the unlucky newcomer.

Clive had not the faintest idea to what this sudden hostility was due, but he was by no means disposed to submit to the proposed infliction.

He made a desperate attempt to break away from his tormentors, but the odds were too great. As half a dozen hands were laid upon him, he struck out right and left; and Figgins went down, and Kerr went sprawling across him. But then five or six fellows had hold of him, and he was helpless. Figgins got up rather slowly. A thin stream of crimson was flowing from his nose.

"Crumbs!" he ejaculated, as he mopped his injured organ with a handkerchief. "A regular firebrand! What's your name, you little bouncer?"

"My name's Sidney Clive."

"Well, you must be taught to treat the young gentlemen of the New House with a proper and becoming respect, and your first lesson shall be a frogmarch round the gym. Now, chaps! March!"

And they marched.

Clive, in spite of his struggles, was powerless. But the march had not proceeded far when a tall, athletic fellow stepped into the gym.

"Hallo, there, you kids! What are you up to now?" he exclaimed.

"Oh crumbs, it's Kildare!" exclaimed Figgins in dismay. "I say, it's all right; we're only showing the new fellow round the gym, you know."

The captain of St. Jim's suppressed a smile.

"Do you usually show newcomers round in that way?" he asked.

"Yes," said Figgins unblushingly; "when they belong to the School House."

"Oh, I see, you young rascal! Let him go instantly!"

"My hat!" said Wootton major, in alarm. "The young duffer's hurt himself."

The three Grammarians, alarmed, jumped down from the cart. They hurried back along the road to the fallen junior.

"Hurt, old chap?" asked Gay anxiously.

Groan!

"My hat!" said Monk. "I—I wish we hadn't collared him now! But who'd have thought he would be ass enough to fall out of the cart?"

Groan!

"What a rotten ending to a jape!" said Gordon Gay, looking blue. "Help him up, you fellows. We'd better take him straight to St. Jim's now."

"Yes, rather!"

The Grammarians helped the new junior to his feet. His whole weight hung upon them.

"Is it your leg?" asked Gay anxiously.

Groan!

"Buck up, old son! We'll take you straight to St. Jim's."

Groan!

"Help him along— Oh, grooogh! My hat!"

The helpless junior had suddenly come to life, as it were. With a violent shove, he sent Wootton major rolling into the ditch, and Frank Monk reeling in after him.

Gordon Gay jumped back, but the South African sprang after him.

Before Gay knew what was happening, he was grasped in a pair of strong arms, and fairly hurled into the ditch after his comrades.

Fortunately for the Grammarians that ditch was a dry one; but they rolled and yelled in a bed of stinging nettles.

Sidney Clive gave them one grin, and then raced up the road after the pony-cart.

He reached the halted vehicle almost in a twinkling, and leaped into it and gathered up the reins. The whip cracked, and the cart bowed off.

The Grammarians staggered out of the ferns and nettles, dusty, stung, breathless, and furious. They gazed speechlessly after the cart, and broke into a run in pursuit. But they had no chance.

"Great Scott!" panted Gordon Gay. "Great pip! The—the awful spoofer! He—he wasn't hurt; he was shamming!"

"Spoofer!" howled Monk.

"Done to the wide!" said Wootton major. "And that's a new kid—a blessed new kid fresh from home! My hat!"

The pony-cart had vanished. Sidney Clive was driving away cheerily. By side lanes he drove, inquiring his way now and then, and soon regained the high road for St. Jim's, and drove on to the school.

"This St. Jim's?" he called out to Taggles, the porter, who was looking out into the road.

Taggles touched his cap.

"Yessir!"

The South African junior jumped down.

"I'm the new boy!" he explained affably.

"Take my box in, please—School House!"

Clive slipped a half-crown into Taggles' hand, and the old porter beamed with civility.

"Will you take charge of the pony-cart, too? It was lent to me by some chaps belonging to a Grammar School hereabouts. They'll call for it, I expect."

"Yessir!"

Sidney Clive walked in cheerfully at the gates of St. Jim's. Half an hour later Gordon Gay looked in to inquire after the pony-cart, and drove it away—with feelings too deep for words.

The New House juniors reluctantly released their victim. Clive escaped from their hands a good deal crumpled, but otherwise not much the worse for his rough experience.

Kildere beckoned to a junior, who was looking curiously in at the door.

"Here, Blake! The new boy belongs to your House. You'd better show him round and explain things to him."

"All right!" replied Blake cheerfully. "Come along, you new chap. Don't mind these duffers; they're only New House wasters, and they can't help it!"

And Blake and the new boy walked out of the gym.

"I should like to know what all this means," said Clive. "Why the dickens did they go for me like a lot of lunatics?"

Blake grinned.

"Of course, you're new to St. Jim's," he said, a little patronisingly. "You don't know the ropes."

"No, I certainly don't."

"You see," explained Blake, "there's always been a keen rivalry between the two Houses. Each is always trying to cut the other out. We always lick the New House at cricket and football, and it makes 'em wild. We have lots of rows with them, and it's jolly fun."

Clive began to understand. And it occurred to him that there would be a good deal of fun in

the contests between the rival Houses of St. Jim's, and he felt himself already eager for the fray.

"Figgins is the leader of the New House," said Blake. "By the by, was it you who tapped his claret?"

"I punched his nose!"

"You must have punched it hard, too, to judge by the look of it," chuckled Blake. "The chaps on our side will be glad to hear about that. But here we are! This is the School House—the top House of St. Jim's."

And they entered, and Blake showed his protegee over the building with a good deal of pride, and introduced him to a number of fellows who had the honour to belong to the School House, and the South African junior received a hearty welcome from Tom Merry & Co.

CHAPTER 5.

Welcome in Study No. 6!

CLIVE quickly fell into the ways of St. Jim's. Before he had been there a few hours he felt himself heart and soul as keen a partisan of the School House as the "oldest inhabitant."

Jack Blake had taken rather a liking to the junior from South Africa, and he showed him round the School House in great good humour.

Footer practice being over, the juniors had come in to tea, and the Terrible Three turned up in Study No. 6.

Herries and Digby were there, getting tea, and Tom Merry, Manners, and Lowther cheerfully lent a hand. They were busy when Blake came in with the new boy.

They nodded to him cheerfully, having already made his acquaintance downstairs.

"Gussy come in?" asked Blake.



Arthur Augustus jumped on to the plank to escape from the Grammarians, but he was only on it for a second! The next moment it slipped, and D'Arcy fell with a splash into the deep, muddy ditch!

"Haven't seen him," said Dig. "Didn't he meet you at the station, Clive?" Clive shook his head.

"Some fellows met me," he said. "They said a fellow named D'Arcy was coming, but he had met with an accident. They were Grammar School chaps."

"Then I suppose they knew all about Gussy's accident," grinned Monty Lowther. "Poor old Gussy—born to trouble!"

"How did you get away from them?" asked Blake.

Clive grinned, and related the adventure of the pony-cart.

There was a roar of laughter in Study No. 6.

"Fairly done in the eye!" chuckled Blake.

"This new kid is really hot stuff; quite ginger, in fact. Dished the Grammarians and dotted Figgins on the boko. Hallo, here's Gussy!"

Arthur Augustus had arrived. He was newly swept and garnished, so to speak. He sneezed his way into the study.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bai Jove! There is nothin' to laugh at, deah boys—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I have caught a feahful cold—atchoo! I fell into a beastly ditch—atchoo!—gwoogh! Is that the new chap?"

"Yes," said Clive. "I'm sorry you've had an accident."

"Yaas, it's howwid! I've just met Mr. Wailton, and he says I've got a cold, and I'm to go to the sanatorium at once," groaned Arthur Augustus. "I suppose I've got wathah a

cold, but I don't want to be shut up in the beastly sanatorium."

"Didn't you tell Wailton so?" grinned Tom Merry.

"It was useless to tell Wailton so, Tom Mewwy. Now I suppose I shall be laid up for a beastly week. Howevah, I am glad to welcome you to St. Jim's, Clive."

"Thank you!" said Clive.

"In the cires, we wegard it as an honah to have a South Afwican in our midst," said Arthur Augustus. "I suppose Wailton hasn't given you a study yet?"

"Not yet."

"Then I twust you will take my place in this study till I come out of sanny."

Blake nodded at once.

"Good idea!" he said. "You'll have to get another study later, Clive—we can't have five here—but for the present we'll take you in and look after you. We are used to having four."

"I shall be glad," said Clive.

"Gwoogh! I think I had bettah go, or Wailton will be aftah me. Gwoogh! Atchoo!"

Arthur Augustus sorrowfully departed. A quarter of an hour later, still sneezing and grunting, he was tucked up in the sanatorium, with a serious cold. And not even the kind ministrations of Miss Marie could quite reconcile him to it. He had serious doubts as to how the School House would get on during his absence.

"Poor old Gussy!" said Tom Merry. "It's hard cheese; and all through his giddy politeness in going to welcome Clive!"

"I'm sorry!" said Clive. "He seems a jolly good sort."

"One of the best, with all his funny ways," said Blake. "Never mind! We'll visit him in the sanatorium, and smuggle in things for him when Miss Marie isn't looking."

To which suggestion the Co. responded heartily:

"Hear, hear!"

The juniors felt really concerned about their noble chum, but they made a hearty tea.

Sidney Clive was feeling quite at home in Study No. 6.

It was a great change for him, from his home on the far-away veld to the School House at St. Jim's. But he seemed to drop into his place without an effort.

The juniors eyed him curiously once or twice. There was none of the nervousness or sheepishness of a new boy about Clive. It was evident that the boy from South Africa knew how to take care of himself.

"Decent chap," said Tom Merry, as the Terrible Three left the study after tea. "I rather like him."

"Same here," agreed Manners.

"But he's booked for a row with Figgins," remarked Monty Lowther. "The great Figgy won't let a new kid punch his nose and do nothing."

"He looks as if he can take care of himself," said Tom Merry, laughing. "I'm glad he's come into our House."

"Hallo! Here's a New House waster!" said Lowther, as Kerr of the Fourth came down the passage. "Roll him downstairs!"

Kerr grinned and held up his hand in sign of peace.

"Pax!" he said.

"That's all very well—"

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"Exactly! I've brought a challenge. Is that new kid hanging about?"

"He's in Study No. 6. From Figgy?" grinned Tom Merry.

"Yes. No malice, you know; but Figgy is going to lick him, on general principles," explained Kerr.

"Perhaps Figgy may be waking up the wrong passenger," suggested the captain of the Shell. "Clive looks rather hefty."

"Oh rats! Figgy's nose is double the usual size, and he's going to mop up Clive, just as a lesson to him. He's been ragged by Sefton, too."

"What's the matter with your prefect?"

"Sefton gave him a hundred lines for fighting," growled Kerr. "Not that Sefton cares twopence whether he fights or not, but he's down on our study. Now Monteith's away—he's gone to see a sick uncle—Sefton is head prefect of the New House, and he's a ten times bigger beast than Monteith ever was. He's Ratty's favourite, you know, or he wouldn't be head prefect. He just jumped at the chance of ragging poor old Figgy. Figgy can't lick a prefect, so he's going to lick Clive—see?"

"Exactly! Quite logical," said Tom, laughing. Kerr went on to Study No. 6, and the Terrible Three went their way, grinning. They had an idea that the boy from South Africa would be able to give a good account of himself even against the mighty Figgins.

CHAPTER 6.

Figgins' Challenge!

STUDY No. 6 had cleared away the tea-things, and were settling down to prep, when there was a tap at the door.

"Come in!" called out Blake.

Kerr of the Fourth entered.

Blake & Co. grinned as they noted a darkened circle round his left eye.

Kerr gave them a cheerful nod.

"Hallo! I see you've got that new merchant here," he remarked.

"Clive's sharing our study while Gussy's laid up," explained Blake. "We're rather busy just now, you New House bounder, but we've got time to roll you along the passage!"

"Don't play the giddy ox!" said Kerr hastily. "I've come here on business; important business in connection with the cheeky new kid."

"With me?" said Clive, in surprise.

"Yes, you, you cheeky young bounder from Borrioboolo! I've come here to bring a challenge."

"Oh! What sort of a challenge?" asked Blake.

"The new kid had the cheek to dot old Figgins on the boko—"

"And you in the eye," Clive remarked cheerfully.

"Never mind my eye," said Kerr hastily. "It's Figgins' nose I'm talking about."

"What? Does he want it punched again?"

"He's going to give you a jolly good hiding for your cheek!" exclaimed Kerr. "That's what I'm here for. Will you meet him this evening behind the boathouse, with two seconds?"

Blake looked at Clive a little dismayed, though he tried not to show it.

Clive was perfectly cool.

"So Figgins wants to fight me?"

"Yes, if you don't back out."

"Oh, there won't be any backing out as far as



"Ladies and gentlemen, owing to the indisposition of the public, we will not perform to-night."

Half-a-crown has been awarded to R. Toffolo, 50, Angell Road, Brixton, London, S.W.9.

I am concerned," said Clive cheerfully. "I'll meet Figgins when and where he likes, with a great deal of pleasure."

Kerr grinned. It was evident that he hadn't the least doubt as to the result of the contest.

"All right. Shall we say in half an hour?"

"That will suit me."

"All serene!"

And Kerr went off, grinning.

"Here, I say," said Blake, "I don't half like this. You'll be licked."

Clive smiled quietly.

"So you think Figgins will lick me?"

"Of course. Tom Merry is the only chap in the Shell who can stand up to him. You can't."

"We shall see."

"I like your pluck, and I hope you'll put up a good fight. But I tell you Figgins is a corker!"

"There's some gloves here," said Clive. "Just you shove 'em on for a few moments, and we'll have a mill to see whether I'm in form."

"All right! No harm in that."

They took off their jackets and donned the gloves. Blake rather prided himself upon his boxing, though he admitted he wasn't up to Figgins' form.

He wasn't prepared for what happened now. The new boy, quiet as he looked, was "all there." He simply played with Blake, keeping so perfect a guard that his opponent could not touch him, and giving back playful taps upon the chest, the chin, or the nose. At length Blake, amazed and breathless, called halt.

"That'll do!" he exclaimed. "If you box old Figgy like that he'll find you a tough customer, Clive."

Clive laughed.

"Do you think he'll lick me?"

"Well, I think you have a chance now."

"So do I!" exclaimed Herries. "My belief is that Clive will come out best."

"I hope so. Dig and I will go with you, Clive. I suppose Figgins will bring a couple of fellows, too. It won't do to have a crowd, you know, or some of the masters or prefects are pretty sure to spot what's going on."

The three juniors left the study and crossed the old elm-shaded quadrangle, and sauntered to the Rhyl, where the boathouse stood. Near there was a place shaded by a big oak and almost hidden by other trees, which was an old battleground of the St. Jim's boys when a dispute had to be settled by a fight.

As ill luck would have it, Sefton spotted the three as they crossed the playing fields.

"Cut along!" said Blake, in an undertone.

"That's Sefton. He likes to fag on our side

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whenever he can, and I can see he's got his eye upon us."

"Are the seniors of the New House allowed to fag us?" asked Clive.

"Well, they aren't supposed to, but they do sometimes, especially Sefton. He's a beastly bully."

"Hallo, there, you kids!" exclaimed Sefton, coming towards them. "One of you go up to the school and ask Baker for my Euclid, and bring it here to me. Cut off!"

"Can't," said Clive, before either of the others could reply. "We've got an appointment, Sefton."

The coolness of this reply from a junior fairly took the prefect's breath away. He glared at Clive speechlessly.

"You are a new boy?" he said, at length.

Clive gave a nod.

"Then perhaps you don't know whom you are addressing?"

"Oh, yes! You're Sefton, aren't you—cock of the walk in the New House?"

"Ah, you know all about it, I see!—And I suppose you are in the School House?"

"Yes, rather!"

"Well, then, you little hound, I'll teach you to pay proper respect to a prefect!"

And he made a grab at the new boy.

"Keep off!" exclaimed Clive, dodging round Blake and Digby. "You know you aren't allowed to fag us chaps, and I'm going to stick up for my rights, so I warn you! Oh crikey!"

The last exclamation was uttered as Sefton caught him, and seized his ear, and gave it a vicious twist. But in a moment Clive wriggled himself loose, Sefton's grasp relaxing as he received a kick on the shin from the youngster in the struggle.

The pain made him howl out, and Clive got away.

"Sorry to hurt you," said Clive, rubbing his ear, now fiery in hue, "but you musn't take liberties with my ear, you know. I bar that. Ah, would you?"

He broke into a run as the infuriated prefect made a spring at him.

Sefton of the Sixth gave chase. Right across the field they went, Clive, who was a good runner, keeping the lead. But he was running directly towards the river, and it looked as if Sefton was certain to catch him.

Blake and Digby, dismayed and anxious, followed the chase.

Clive was close to the water's edge now, and Sefton was only a few paces behind. The prefect, wild with rage, was running his hardest.

On the very edge of the water Clive halted and flung himself down.

Unable to stop himself in time, Sefton went stumbling over him, and plunged headlong into the water. With a mighty splash, he disappeared, and a simultaneous yell of laughter burst from Blake and Dig.

Clive picked himself up, and joined his two friends, bursting with merriment.

"Scot!" ejaculated Blake. "You'd better give Sefton a wide berth after that. Come on!"

They scudded away, turning their backs on the boathouse. When Sefton, panting and puffing, scrambled out of the river, they were vanishing through a hedge.

The New House prefect ground his teeth, and, muttering threats of vengeance, made his way to St. Jim's for a change of clothing. And when

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he was gone and the coast was clear, Clive and his friends hurried to the boathouse, where Figgins, Kerr, and Fatty Wynn impatiently awaited them.

CHAPTER 7.

The Fight!

"THERE he is!" exclaimed Kerr, as Clive and his two friends came under the trees behind the boathouse. "We've been waiting for you, slowcoach!"

"You must thank your no-class prefect for that," the new boy answered cheerfully.

"What, has Sefton got wind of it?" exclaimed Kerr.

"What if he has?" said Figgins. "He wouldn't interfere to prevent a new kid getting licked."

"Oh, no, he doesn't know anything about this!" said Clive coolly. "He was cheeky, that's all, and I had to give him a ducking!"

The three looked at each other. What kind of a new boy was this, who talked of ducking Sefton, the prefect of the New House, second only to Kildare, now Monteith was away?

"I say, you're talking rot, you know!" said Figgins uneasily. "And look here, if you're ready, I am!"

"I'm ready and willing!"

And, without much more ado, they "peeled" and faced one another.

When they stood face to face the advantage seemed to be with Figgys. He was quite three inches taller than Clive, and he was well-known at St. Jim's as a boxer.

But Clive's manner expressed a cool indifference which was encouraging to his friends, though there was nothing of "bounce" in his manner.

"Buck up!" said Kerr. "Get through with it before some beastly prefect is down on us."

And the adversaries set to with a will.

Figgins, labouring under the delusion that he had only just to "wade in" to knock the new boy into the middle of next week, or still farther along the calendar, led off with a smart attack.

Clive gave a little ground at first, but suddenly, near the end of the round, he made a feint with his left, and landed his right fairly on Figgins' nose. The leader of the New House juniors went to the grass in an abrupt fashion.

Kerr picked him up. A stream of red was flowing from Figgins' nose, and he looked dazed.

"Say, old man, what did you let him do that for?" was Kerr's consoling inquiry.

"Do you think I let him do it on purpose?" demanded Figgins.

"Well—"

"Don't be an ass!"

"That was nobby!" exclaimed Blake, patting his principal on the back. "Keep that up, and you'll knock Figgins out in no time."

"Will he?" ejaculated Figgins, who overheard the remark. "We'll see about that, you bouncers! Come on!"

They began the second round.

Figgins' overwhelming confidence was gone now. He fought with care and all the skill he was capable of. And this time it was Clive who went to the grass, though not before he had severely punished his adversary.

"Good!" was Blake's verdict, as he sponged his principal's face after the round. "I can see you're a game 'un. Keep it up!"

"I did him that time," said Figgins to his second.

Kerr nodded, but he did not reply. He looked

LAUGH THESE OFF!

—with Monty
Lowther.



Hallo, Everybody!

**Where can I learn to play the bagpipes?
asks Herries. Somewhere else!**

"Can you tell me the nationality of Napoleon?" asked Mr. Selby of Gibson. "Course I can," gasped Gibson, thinking hard. "Right," beamed Mr. Selby. (Corsican.)

**Think, now: In time of trial, what brings
most comfort to a man? Not guilty!**

"Have you ever been on the air?" asked the theatrical producer. "Laddie," responded the hard-up actor, "I've lived on it!"

**Then there was the Scot who invented a
mousetrap which killed the wee beastie
before it got at the cheese.**

The Australian winter is better than the English summer, says Kangaroo. So is the English winter!

**Skimpole says he likes winding staircases.
Personally, I have never wound one.**

as he felt—very dubious. The round had been fiercely contested.

"Well, be careful!"
"Rats!"

And at it the combatants went again. Figgins had been rendered angry instead of cautious by his second's advice, and he forced the fight hard.

Clive received two or three heavy drives, which made him stagger. But, watching his opportunity, he planted his right fist in Figgins' eye, and as the junior reeled, followed it up with his left on the jaw, and Figgins went down with a thump in the grass.

"Bravo!" shouted Blake, in delight. "How do you feel, Clive?"

"Fit as a fiddle!"

"I bet Figgy doesn't!"

Figgins had been picked up by Kerr and Wynn, and he was sitting on the latter's knee, while Kerr sponged his bruised face. He looked decidedly groggy.

"Time!" called out Digby

Kerr looked anxiously at his chief.

"Going on, old man?"

"Yes, of course!"

"Oh, all right!"

He had no more hope of seeing his chief lick the new boy. But Figgins would not admit to himself what all the others could see.

The fourth round was rather tame, both of them

A shepherd who broadcast recently said he always sleeps very soundly. Of course, he always has plenty of sheep handy to count.

**Third Form howler: "Who was it went
into the lion's den and came out alive?"
asked Mr. Selby. "The lion," replied
Jameson, after some thought.**

A reader who is keen on crosswords tells me he has been trying to think of a word for four weeks. How about "month"?

**A scientist believes a way will be found to
make wireless exterminate germs. The
chief difficulty is to make the little pests
listen in.**

The Head's gardener has some new seeds which he claims are remarkably quick growers. It is not true, however, that after he has planted them he has to jump clear.

**Oh, did you hear about the burglar who
liked to live on the shady side of the road?**

Have you read the great literary sensation, by a girl writer? "The Broken Window," by Eva Brick.

**A solicitor, they say, is a man who lives on
his writs.**

At a Charity Show in Rylecombe, the Head's gardener showed some of his bees. Sort of buzz-ar.

**Look out for pink-striped hippopotami,
chaps. Yes, look out for them, and let me
know if you see any.**

All the best, chaps!

being a little breathless and the worse for wear. But the fifth round was a fierce one.

Figgins stood on the defensive at first; but the new boy attacked fiercely, and twice his fists reached Figgins' face. Then Figgins fought his hardest, and terrific blows were given and received.

Figgins was game to the last, but the lookers-on could see that the new boy was steadily getting the better of him. And at last, with a terrific right-hander straight from the shoulder, Clive laid his adversary upon the ground, from which he was unable to rise without Kerr's assistance.

"I'm done!" he gasped. "I can't go on!"

Clive wasn't in much better condition, but he was ready to toe the mark again, if necessary.

"We give in!" said Kerr glumly.

Clive walked across to his late adversary and held out his hand.

"Shake, old chap!" he said. "We've had a good tussle, but I hope there's no malice on either side."

Figgins grinned faintly, and put out his hand and shook Clive's cordially enough.

"All right, old man!" he said. "I don't care. We don't bear malice, but we're going to give you chaps a high old time, and don't you forget it!"

"We'll try to give you as good as you send!" laughed Clive.

And so they parted.

CHAPTER 8.

Sefton Seeks Vengeance!

IN the Junior Common-room of the School House there was only one topic that evening—the fight behind the boathouse, and Clive's victory over the chief of the New House juniors.

The victory caused great excitement, and the new boy had jumped into popularity at a bound. He received quite an ovation from the jubilant juniors, but he bore his blushing honours with becoming modesty. He also bore a black eye and a fine assortment of cuts and bruises, which considerably impaired his beauty.

The Common-room was in a buzz of talk about the fight and the downfall of Figgins when a head was put in at the door, and a pair of spiteful eyes looked over the groups of juniors in search of Clive.

"Hallo!" exclaimed Talbot. "There's Sefton!"

It was Sefton. Seeing Clive, he advanced into the room, an evil expression upon his face.

Every eye was upon him at once.

"You young cad! I've caught you, have I?"

And Sefton made a dash towards Clive.

Clive promptly dodged round the table.

"Now, don't lose your temper!" he admonished. "Just be calm, and tell us what you want."

"I'm going to give you the biggest hiding you've ever had in your life!" snarled Sefton, glaring at him across the table.

"Rats!" answered Clive. "You've no business here! Chaps, are we going to stand this cheek? This is a respectable House; no dogs admitted! Clear off before we chuck you out!"

Sefton panted with rage. He made a rush round the table, but the new boy, wisely declining to come to close quarters with the big bully, dodged him nimbly, and twice round the table they went till Sefton stopped, panting and furious.

The juniors around were shouting with laughter, and Sefton realised that he was making an exhibition of himself.

Blake had quietly slipped out to fetch Kildare. For a senior of the New House to invade the School House to punish a boy belonging to it was a breach of all the laws, written and unwritten, at St. Jim's, and he knew that the captain of the school would have something to say about it.

"You young cub!" hissed Sefton. "I'll make you smart soon as I get hold of you!"

"First catch your hare!" said Clive coolly.

"You little hound!"

And Sefton, giving up in despair the idea of chasing the lively junior, tried to scramble over the table.

As he did so somebody threw a dictionary, which caught him on the side of the head with a fearful clump. He flashed round, glaring with rage, just in time to catch an inkpot on the bridge of his nose.

The fluid ran down his face and into his mouth, and he spluttered and gasped.

Just as he seemed about to "run amok" amongst the laughing juniors, Kildare came in with Blake.

"Hallo, hallo, there!" exclaimed the captain of St. Jim's, in his cheery way. "What's the row here? What's up, Sefton?"

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"Look at my face!" howled Sefton. "Is that how you teach your kids to treat a senior?"

"Ha, ha, ha! I'm sorry! You do look a sight, certainly! But what's the matter?"

"I came here to thrash Clive!"

"You had no right to do that," said Kildare quietly. "You know perfectly well that I keep order in my own House, and that the prefects of one House are not allowed to interfere with what goes on in the other. You know that as well as I do. I've had complaints a good many times about you and your set fagging the youngsters on this side. It's not playing the game, and I tell you plainly it's got to be stopped!"

"Who's going to stop it?" asked Sefton, with a sneer.

"I am!" said Kildare, still quietly.

"Do you know what this new kid has done to me?" broke out Sefton, changing the subject.

"I didn't know he had done anything."

"He shoved me into the river."

"Is this true?" said Kildare.

"Does that mean that you doubt my word?" asked Sefton passionately.

"I must hear what Clive has to say."

"He will tell lies, of course!"

"You've no right to suppose so. Answer me, Clive!"

The South African junior nodded.

"I tripped him up, and he went in," confessed Clive frankly. "He was chasing me. He wanted to fag me, and I wasn't taking any."

"I see how it is," said Kildare. "You were interfering with juniors of this House, Sefton. I can't blame the kids for standing up for their rights."

"Of course, I knew that you'd back the young cad up in his insubordination!" hissed Sefton. "You'd stand up for anything that was done against our House, and you'd set the kids on to cheek the Sixth Form!"

"That's not true, and you know it!"

"It's true, but it won't be stood long! You've given yourself too many airs—"

"I think you've said enough, Sefton!" interrupted Kildare. "Don't you think that you'd better be getting back to your own quarters?"

"I shall not go until I have thrashed that cheeky young scoundrel—"

"Nonsense!"

"Nonsense—eh? I'll show you!"

Sefton had completely lost his temper now, and he had thrown discretion to the winds. He made a rush towards Clive.

Kildare's face grew angry at this defiance of his authority on his own ground. He made a rapid stride forward, and laid a heavy hand upon Sefton's shoulder.

"Sefton, you'd better understand—"

"Hands off!"

"You shan't touch that junior," said the captain of St. Jim's, tightening his grip.

"Let go! Take that, then!"

And the New House prefect's clenched fist was dashed full into Kildare's face.

A thrill almost of horror ran through the crowd of juniors. Kildare's face turned scarlet, then deadly pale. With one twist of his arm he sent Sefton reeling through the doorway, to fall in a heap in the corridor outside.

He was up again in a moment.

Kildare sprang towards him with blazing eyes. "Get out! Do you hear? Get out, or, prefect as you are, I'll thrash you!"

And Sefton thought he had better go. He slunk away, muttering vengeance.



As Sefton tried to scramble over the table to catch Clive, somebody threw a dictionary, which caught him on the side of the head. He flashed round, glaring with rage—just in time to catch an inkpot on the bridge of the nose!

CHAPTER 9. A House Raid!

THE scene between the captain of the school and the head prefect of the New House became the talk of St. Jim's.

Most of those who discussed it expected the affair to go further; but by the efforts of some of the Sixth Form of both Houses, peace was patched up.

A "row" between Kildare and Sefton was, of course, a serious matter, which the masters would have had to take notice of. When Sefton calmed down, he saw that he had gone too far, and that he was too hopelessly in the wrong to risk an inquiry by the Head. So he sent, finally, an apology to Kildare, and the affair ended.

But the reconciliation, though it tidied over an awkward situation, left them no better friends than before. Honest, frank Kildare had an instinctive contempt for the bullying prefect, and he knew that Sefton hated him, and would never forgive him. And in Sefton's heart envy and hatred rankled more bitterly than ever.

He hated Kildare because he was frank and true, because he was captain of St. Jim's, because he was popular—almost as popular in the New House as his own. He hated him for these reasons, and for a score of others. And since the altercation in the Junior Common-room that night, his hatred had grown more deadly.

How to revenge himself upon the one he chose to consider his enemy—that was the problem which he set himself to solve, and which he discussed with his chums—two fellows like himself, given to bullying and petty tyranny.

It was a few days after the row that Blake and Clive, coming up the lane from the school

towards the village, spied Sefton and his crony, Gibbs, walking towards them. Although the prefect had not taken notice of Clive since the row, the new boy felt pretty sure that he would not let slip this opportunity; so, as soon as he caught sight of Sefton, he jerked Blake aside, and bundled him through the hedge. There they took cover, and waited for the two seniors to pass.

"I don't think they've seen us," said Clive.

The two seniors, apparently deeply interested in their talk, were walking slowly, and they came on without the least suspicion that the two juniors had taken cover behind the hedge. And as they came nearer, the two juniors could not help hearing what they said.

The first words they distinguished were spoken by Gibbs.

"I say, it would be frightfully risky, old fellow."

"I don't care!" burst out Sefton fiercely. "I tell you, I'll get my own back! I hate him more now than ever I did before, the prig!"

"I don't like him any more than you do. We could get up a movement against him, or something, if he wasn't so confoundedly popular! But he's liked by both Houses. It's only our set that's against him, and—"

"I know. We can't settle his hash by fair means. But we'll do it some other way."

They passed out of earshot. The juniors looked at each other, each with a rather startled expression.

"Well, I'm blown!" said Blake, at length.

"A precious pair of rascals!" exclaimed Clive. "It was Kildare they were talking about, of course?"

"Of course."

"I wish we had heard more. We really ought to put Kildare on his guard."

Blake shook his head.

"No good. He wouldn't listen to us, and it would look like telling tales. But we can keep our eyes open."

"Yes; I suppose so. Well, come on, or we shan't be at the tuckshop before Mrs. Murphy has sold out all her fresh tarts."

And they hurried up the lane to the old village of Rylcombe.

As it was a half-holiday, the tuckshop was pretty full of boys from St. Jim's, and two or three were lounging in the doorway, Kerr among them.

A pony-cart, which Clive recognised as the one in which he had driven to St. Jim's, was standing in front of the shop, evidently waiting for someone who had gone inside.

"That's old Oakes' pony-cart," Blake remarked. "Somebody's got it out for the afternoon."

While Blake was speaking, Figgins came out of the tuckshop, carrying a basket, which he placed in the cart, and then went back.

A flash of mischief darted into Clive's eyes.

"Come on! That's our game!"

"Who—what?"

"Don't you see? The New House juniors have hired the pony-cart. Old Figgins has shoved in the tommy for a picnic."

"What about it?"

"Why, we're going to collar the pony-cart! Come on!"

"All right; I'm game!"

Blake was heart and soul in the enterprise at once. If it succeeded, it would be one up against the New House.

They ran towards the pony-cart.

Figgins, Kerr, and Wynn were coming out of the tuckshop, each carrying a bag of comestibles in his hand.

"I say, what are you up to?" shouted Figgins, as Clive put his foot on the step, and sprang into the cart, while Blake scrambled up behind.

Clive did not take the trouble to answer. He snatched up the reins and the whip, and gave the horse a flick.

Figgins & Co. seemed for a moment or two quite petrified by this daring raid. But as the pony-cart moved off they rushed desperately towards it, howling out terrific threats.

Clive whipped up the horse, and it went down the village street at a fast pace, with the three juniors in hot pursuit.

Blake sat facing the rear, and making grimaces at the pursuers. The New House juniors made tremendous efforts to overtake the trap. Fortunately for them, Clive had to slow up for a busy crossroad.

Putting on a spurt, Figgins and Kerr reached the pony-cart and hung on behind, trying to climb in. Fatty Wynn had been left behind.

"Keep her going!" shouted Blake. "I'll manage these rotters!"

"All right, old son!" answered Clive cheerfully; and he drove on at a spanking rate.

With their boots scraping and clattering on the ground, the two juniors clung on desperately.

"Yah! Trying to collar our grub!" gasped Figgins. "Just like you rotters!"

"Do you want the tommy?"

"Yes; and we're going to have it!"

"Here's some of it, then!"

And having picked up a large jam tart out of

the basket, Blake slammed it down upon Figgins' upturned face as he hung on behind.

"Oh! Ah! Ooch!"

Figgins let go his hold and went down into the dust, blinded by jam.

"Will you have one?" asked Blake politely. "Or perhaps you'd like some lemonade?"

And after unscrewing the stopper, he proceeded to pour a bottle of that refreshing beverage over the head of Kerr.

"I'll pay you out for this!" howled Kerr, as he dropped into the road.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Blake. "Who scores this time—eh? Go home, duffers! Ha, ha, ha!"

And the pony-cart rattled on, soon disappearing from the sight of Figgins & Co.

They picked themselves up, looking decidedly sheepish.

Figgins' face was caked with jam and dust, and Kerr's hair was like a wet mop with lemonade. They looked so utterly funny that village boys, forming an admiring circle round them, howled with laughter.

"Haw, haw, haw! Doan't uns look a soight, Jarge? Haw, haw, haw!"

"Get out of the way, you yokels!" exclaimed Figgins, and he and Kerr strode off.

Meanwhile, the raiders were enjoying themselves. A drive through the pleasant lanes, a feast upon the contents of the basket, and the consciousness of a triumph over the rival House at St. Jim's, made them naturally jubilant.

They had "done" the New House fellows—completely done them—and they were determined not to let Figgins & Co. forget it.

CHAPTER 10.

In Full Warpaint!

WHEN Blake and Clive entered the quadrangle at St. Jim's just before calling-over, Figgins & Co. were ready for them.

Clive saw the enemy as he passed the gates.

"Great Scott! We shall have to run the gauntlet!" he said. "Old Figgins and his lot are there in force waiting for us! Come on!"

"I'm ready."

And they made a rush for the entrance of the School-House, across the quadrangle.

"There they are!" shouted Figgins. "Sock it into 'em!"

The two juniors, with a desperate charge, broke through the swarming foe, though not without a good many thumps.

The enemy pursued them up to the very steps of the School House. Clive and Blake bolted in blindly, and the next moment there was a yell and a fall.

"Oh scissors!" gasped Clive, horrified.

Mr. Railton had been coming out of the House, and Clive had butted right into him, sending him sprawling. But with great presence of mind he rushed to the fallen master to assist him to rise.

"I hope you're not hurt, sir," he said meekly.

"I'm very sorry I cannoned into you, sir."

"Oh—ah—er!" gasped Mr. Railton, as he stood up rather unsteadily. "What do you mean, Clive, by bolting into the House in that reckless manner?"

The New House juniors outside heard the master's voice, and melted away into thin air.

"I'm very sorry, sir," stammered Clive. "I—I was in a great hurry, sir!"

"And why were you in a great hurry?"

"It's time for calling-over, sir," Clive said

It Pays to Advertise!

Even the backs of stamps have been put to the use of advertising!

MOST collectors don't give enough attention to the backs of their stamps. Quite rightly, they examine their stamps' faces with infinite care, but they generally forget that there's something behind the face which can be quite as interesting as the face itself.

Take the case of some Portuguese stamps issued in 1895 to honour the seven-hundredth anniversary of the birth of St. Anthony of Padua. Their face designs are striking enough, if you favour subjects of a religious turn. But their backs contain something which make them completely unique—a neat little Latin prayer.

Actually the backs of stamps have been frequently put to practical use. When water-marked paper, for instance, has run short, the official watermark has been printed on the back of a stamp, no doubt to give the stamp an official flavour in the eyes of the public. New Zealand resorted to this practice in 1925, while the Argentine probably set the fashion earlier by the use of a rayed sun device.

STICK TO THIS STAMP.

The most profitable use of stamps' backs has been to let them to advertisers. We ourselves tried out this experiment by "letting" our stamps' backs to the makers of Pears' Soap. The half-penny value of the Victorian Jubilee series of 1887 was so treated. But just before the stamps were distributed to the post

offices, the authorities decided that they would be best purely as a private experiment, and their sale was stopped. A number of these specimens have, however, slipped into the market, and if you are ever lucky enough to lay hands on one, stick

to it. It will be a worthwhile item in later years!

More satisfactory, apparently, were the advertising experiments of several other countries. New Zealand carried on the scheme for some years towards the close of the last century, and Belgium and Italy have also tried it out.

Talking of the latter country, we come to an interesting development of the "backing" business. Finding after a time opposition to letting the backs themselves, the Italians stuck on the advert beneath the stamp, as you see above.



Something new in advertising is shown on this fifty cent Italian stamp.

NICARAGUA TAKES THE CAKE!

For years the Spaniards have made a sensible use of their stamps' backs. They have numbered them. These control numbers are the same for every stamp in a sheet, and enable the authorities, when warfare permits, to check up easily on the sale of their stamps in the various districts under their control.

Nicaragua, however, takes the cake where ingenuity in using stamp-backs comes in. She has always been rather haphazard in stamp issuing, and back in 1909 her postal authorities found themselves at their wits' end to provide some temporary franks while a new series was being prepared. Rummaging amongst their old stamp stocks they came across a collection of railway stamps. These had already had their purpose changed for them by an overprint on their faces which rendered them legal as bill stamps.

That didn't worry the Nicaraguans a whit. They turned them over and had new overprints impressed on their backs to change them into postage stamps!

diplomatically. He didn't want to betray Figgins & Co.

"Ah, you were in a hurry not to be late for calling-over! In the circumstances I will excuse you, but please be more careful in the future."

And Mr. Railton was turning away, when Clive blurted out:

"No, sir; I'd—I'd rather not deceive you, sir. I had forgotten all about calling-over when I bolted in."

Mr. Railton stared at him, while Blake gave a little gasp of dismay.

"I must commend you for your frankness, Clive," said the School House master. "Will you have the kindness, then, to tell me why you came in like a wild Indian?"

Clive was silent.

A slight smile broke over the Housemaster's face. He had heard shouting in the quadrangle, and he guessed the truth.

"Never mind, Clive. I am very pleased to see that you scorn a lie. You may go."

And Clive, somewhat surprised at escaping so easily, hastened away with his chum.

"Oh, you little Georgie Washington! Where's your little hatchet?" gurgled Blake.

But Clive's face was serious.

"I couldn't take him in when I saw that he trusted to my word. It went against the grain somehow."

Blake slapped him on the back.

"Of course it did, old chap! I was only joking. But, come on, or we shall be late!"

As it was, they were just in time to answer "Adsum!" when their names were called at calling-over.

The next morning there were some gloomy faces over in the New House. The story of how the School House had "dished" the New House chief was all over St. Jim's.

And Figgins' temper wasn't improved by a letter which he had received by the morning post. It contained a postal order to pay for the pecuniary loss he had been put to in hiring the pony-cart. There was also an extremely laconic note in Clive's handwriting—"Many thanks!"

"Hang him!" growled Figgins. "We shall

never hear the last of it until we've done something to take those rotters down a peg!"

"We must do something!" Kerr exclaimed resolutely. "We must get our own back somehow!"

And Figgins, Kerr, and Wynn put their heads together and plotted a plot.

Clive, who intended to take part in a paper-chase which was to come off the following Saturday, having been selected as one of the hares, went out every evening for a run to keep himself fit.

After a good spell, he turned back towards the school by a footpath across the fields close by St. Jim's. He had slackened a bit, having good time to get in before calling-over, and he was thinking of anything but danger, when suddenly three figures burst from a hedge and pitched themselves upon him.

In a twinkling he lay upon his back, with Kerr sitting on his chest, and Wynn on his legs.

"Got him!" said the voice of Figgins, in tones of satisfaction.

Clive stared up at his assailants, powerless to move, but still undaunted.

"Yes, you've got me," he said pleasantly. "What are you going to do?"

"You'll see in a minute!" Figgins produced a small coil of rope. "Turn him over, chaps!"

"I say, chuck it!" protested Clive. "Three to one isn't playing the game!"

"Too bad, isn't it?" grinned Figgins. "Almost as bad as collaring a chap's pony-cart when he wasn't looking, and wolfing his grub! Over with him!"

And over Clive went on his chest in the dust, and, in spite of his struggles, his wrists were pulled behind him and knotted together with rope. Then Figgins & Co. jerked him to his feet.

"Hold him, you two, in case he bolts, while I get out the colours," said Figgins.

Clive wondered what that meant. But he soon saw. His heart sank a little when Figgins drew out a small tin box of painter's colours and a brush, and commenced operations.

First, he drew a broad line of the deepest red down Clive's face, from forehead to chin, putting on the paint with a liberal hand.

"Here, I say, hold on!" said Clive, in vain protest.

Figgins grinned.

"Keep your head still; if you move it you'll spoil the effect. You ought to make quite a sensation when you return to St. Jim's," he said.

"Do you mean to send me back to school in this state?" asked Clive, aghast.

"Of course; it's to celebrate your arrival."

"Look here—"

"Keep your noddle still!"

"Shan't!"

"Kerr, pull his ears whenever he shifts his wooden head," said Figgins imperturbably.

"Right-ho!"

So Clive perforce kept his head still.

Figgins calmly proceeded with his work. On either side of the red streak he painted a streak of Chinese white. Then he filled up the space between that and the ears with a bright sky-line. By this time the unfortunate Clive's appearance was, to say the least of it, unique. But his tormentor was not finished yet. He proceeded to draw thick, black circles round his eyes, and to place a big dot of black on the tip of his nose. Then he blacked an enormous moustache. The

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three New House juniors howled with laughter as they looked upon their victim.

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Figgins. "This beats jam tarts slammed on a fellow's face!"

"And bottles of lemonade poured over his napper!" grinned Kerr.

"I think he'll do," said Fatty. "Won't some of the School House bounders stare when they see him!"

Figgins looked at his watch.

"We shall have to buzz off," he said. "I'll just stick the placard on."

And he flattened out a large piece of thin cardboard upon Clive's chest and pinned it there.

Upon it was written the words, in Roman capitals:

"I AM THE BIGGEST ASS IN THE SCHOOL HOUSE."

"That'll do," said Figgins. "Now, come on, you chaps! Good-evening, ass!"

And off went the triumphant Co., leaving Clive in about the worst fix of his life. What was best to be done he did not know.

He cast a desperate glance up and down the footpath. No one was in sight. It occurred to him that he might be able to get into St. Jim's without being seen. At all events, it was useless to linger there. He started walking as quickly as he could towards the school.

The gates were still open when he reached them, but Taggles, the porter, had come out of his lodge. He fairly jumped at the sight of the fearful countenance of the hapless South African.

"Why—what the——" he gasped.

Then he read the placard and chuckled.

Clive, with his face flaming under the paint, dashed past him into the quadrangle.

It was swarming with fellows, the whole of the junior portion of the New House having gathered to see the joke, and to greet the advent of the painted South African. And a number of the School House, scenting "something on," were there, too, wondering what was up, and what caused the grins and chuckles and general merriment of their rivals.

Clive's appearance explained it. His red-white-and-blue countenance, with black, ringed eyes, caused, as Figgins had predicted, a sensation. The juniors howled with laughter, and even Tom Merry & Co. could not help joining in it. But the placard soon roused the latter to indignation.

Blake rushed to help his chum. But Kerr tripped him up. Figgins & Co. were determined to see the joke through, and, being in greater force, they were able to stop interference.

CHAPTER 11.

To the Rescue!

"RESCUE! Rescue!" shouted Clive.

And the School House fellows made a rush.

"Line up!" yelled Figgins. "Keep the bounders off!"

And the laughing juniors closed round Clive and drove back Tom Merry & Co. by superior numbers.

And so Clive was paraded in state across the quadrangle, amidst the howling merriment of

the juniors and the laughter of a good number of seniors, who had put their heads out of their study windows.

Clive's blood was boiling, but he couldn't help himself.

But just then a brilliant idea occurred to Tom Merry. Taggles had been using the garden hose, and he had not yet put it away. It was in the hands of Tom in a moment. As the crowd surged towards the School House he turned the nozzle upon Figgins & Co.

"Mako way for the new School House ass!" Figgins was shouting. "Clear the way, there! Oh—oh! Oooh!"

A jet of cold water caught him full in the mouth. Then—swish, it went over the rest, drenching them and putting a sudden stop to their merriment.

Some of them made a dash at Tom Merry, but his chums gathered round him to defend the possession of the hose, and the stream of water drove the boldest back. They were drenched in no time.

"Go it, Tommy!" roared Monty Lowther. "Give 'em a good wash! The New House bouncers need it!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

But Tom Merry did not need telling to "go it." He was already going it, with the full force of the hose.

Figgins & Co. made a desperate rush at the captain of the Shell, amid yells of laughter from the School House juniors, even Sidney Clive joining in the howl of merriment. But Tom Merry held steadily on to the hose, and the stream of water kept the enemy back.

Kangaroo of the Shell jerked out a penknife and cut the South African junior loose.

"Cut!" said the Cornstalk junior. "You don't want Railton to see you with a chivvy like that. You look more like a Central African cannibal than a Cape Colonist!"

Clive grinned under the paint, made a dive for the School House, and vanished.

Skimpole of the Shell was coming downstairs as Clive rushed in.

Skimpole stopped dead, blinking at the South African junior, with his eyes nearly bulging through his spectacles.

"Good—good gracious!" gasped Skimpole. "What—what—"

Then he collapsed on the stairs.

Clive had no time to waste on Skimpole. He did not want Mr. Railton or Mr. Lathom to see him in his weird warpaint. He shoved the amazed Skimmy aside, and Skimpole sat down on the stairs.

Clive rushed on to the Fourth Form dormitory, and was quickly splashing away with soap and water.

Meanwhile, the battle in the quadrangle was over. The hose was a little too much for Figgins & Co. They fled from the stream of water, leaving the School House in victorious possession of the field.

"Groogh!" said Figgins, as he rubbed himself down in the New House. "I'm wet!"

"Look at me!" mumbled Fatty Wynn. "Atchoo! I shall catch a cold and be laid up along with Gussy! Groogh!"

There were doleful exclamations from the crowd of New House juniors as they towelled themselves down in the dormitory. The door opened, and Sefton of the Sixth looked in.

"Ragging in the quad again?" said Sefton.

"Ahem! Only—a little scrap with the School House bouncers, Sefton!" said Figgins. "Take a hundred lines all round!" said Sefton. And he strode away.

Figgins looked after him with burning eyes. "The rotter!" he muttered. "Hundred lines all round! Monteith wouldn't have noticed us! He's decent! I shall scrag Sefton some day! I know the rotter hopes that Monteith will stay away for good, and that he'll be head prefect all the time!"

"The rotter thinks he's got a chance of getting in as captain of St. Jim's," growled Redfern. "Some of the chaps have heard him talking to Gibbs about it. The silly ass! I wish Monteith was back! Groogh! I'm wet!"

"Yow-ow! So am I!" mumbled Fatty Wynn.

"Still, it was a good jape on that African bouncer," said Figgins.

"My hat—yes! But I'm wet!"

And it was a considerable time before the heroes of the New House were dry.

Meanwhile, Sidney Clive had cleaned himself of the paint, and come down to call-over. He passed Skimpole, still in a state of great astonishment, on the stairs.

"Have you seen a dreadful-looking, painted savage, Clive?" gasped Skimpole. "He passed me like a flash."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I was really very alarmed."

"Never mind. Come in to call-over," chuckled Clive. "The savage has gone—quite gone. You're quite safe, Skimmy."

And the junior from South Africa went into Big Hall, just in time to answer "Adsum" to his name, when it was called by Mr. Railton.

CHAPTER 12.

A Sad Surrender!

EXASPERATED as the School House juniors were by the indignity to which Clive had been subjected, few of them could help laughing at the ridiculous figure he had cut as he marched across the quadrangle, painted and placarded.

All through the evening they talked about it, with many a grin and chuckle, and Clive was chaffed without mercy.

Figgins & Co., of course, made the most of the affair. But Clive's opportunity for revenge came at last.

One day, after afternoon school, he was strolling with Tom Merry along the river, when he suddenly stopped and drew his companion into the cover of a group of willows.

Tom looked at him inquiringly.

"What's up, Clive?"

"Just look!" And Clive pointed.

Some distance out in the river was a little island, where the boys of St. Jim's were fond of fishing. Clive had caught sight of Figgins, Kerr, and Wynn sitting there with their rods. Under the willows a few yards from the anglers a boat was tied to a stump.

"Well, what's the game?" asked Tom Merry.

Clive grinned.

"Where would they be if somebody collared their boat?"

"On the island."

"Yes; and with no chance of getting off it."

"But how can you get hold of the boat?"

"Swim out to it."

"If they saw you coming——"

"They won't."

And Clive began to strip under the willows. He stepped into the water some distance above the island, and let the current carry him down to it, a few strokes carrying him far enough out.

Tom Merry watched him anxiously as he landed, and disappeared into the bushes on the island. The New House anglers evidently had no suspicion of the raid. But to get to the boat, Clive would have to pass very near them.

Tom Merry watched the willows where the boat was moored. He soon saw a head appear amongst them. Then, with a sudden bound, a figure sprang out into the boat, a knife flashed on the painter, and a vigorous push sent the boat out from the shore.

The deed was done.

Figgins & Co. started up in amazement. But the boat was beyond their reach. Clive had got hold of the oars and was vigorously pulling towards the bank, where Tom awaited him.

"Hi, there! What are you up to? Bring back that boat!" shouted Figgins.

Clive didn't take the trouble to reply. He ran the boat into the bank, and Tom seized the painter. Then Clive sprang ashore, and began to rub himself dry—as far as it could be done with a couple of pocket handkerchiefs—and then donned his clothes.

All the while, Figgins & Co. on the island kept up a volleying of threats, entreaties and abuse, none of which had the slightest effect. At last, Figgins gave it up in despair.

"What the dickens are we to do?" he exclaimed. "We're stranded here, unless they send us back the boat. We can't swim and leave our clothes here."

"They won't send back the boat," said Kerr.

"No. I say, they've got us this time."

"Try to make terms with them," suggested Kerr. "I suppose there's nothing else to be done."

The chief of the Co. shouted across the water.

"Hallo!" called back Clive, who had by this time finished dressing.

"We want that boat!"

"Really?"

"We must have it!"

"Rats!"

"Will you come to terms? We'll own ourselves done!"

"Not good enough," said Clive decisively.

"What do you want, then?" asked Figgins, looking uneasy.

"You're licked, aren't you?"

"Ye-es."

"Well, you must sign a document to that effect—all three of you—something in this style. 'We three stupid asses confess ourselves licked, and we beg the pardon of the gentlemen of the School House for having been impertinent to them upon various occasions.' And you must all sign it."

"Ha, ha, ha!" howled Tom. But it did not seem a laughing matter to the unfortunate Co.

"I'll see you hanged first!" roared Figgins.

"All right. I won't persuade you. Come on, Tom! We'll have a row up the river."

"Stop a bit!" called out Figgins. "You've got us at a disadvantage. If we stay here we shan't be able to do our prep, and we shall get into a row to-morrow."

"Thank your own obstinacy for that."

"Let us have the boat, and——"

"On the condition I've named; no other."

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"We've no pen or ink here, or paper."

"I've a fountain-pen and a pocket-book."

"But——"

"No more buts. Do you agree?"

Figgins looked dismally at his chums.

"You can't do anything else," said Kerr.

"We can't stay here all night," declared Fatty Wynn.

"We shall have to give in, then. We'll give him the paper, but we'll raid the School House some time, and get it back."

Figgins called out:

"We'll do it, Clive!"

"That's sensible. I'll chuck the pocket-book and the pen across to you. You'll write it



Figgins & Co. made a desperate rush at Tom Merry, but the New House juniors were drenched. "Go it, Tommy!"

plainly, and put your usual signatures, or the bargain's off. And no tricks when I bring you the boat, you know. It's a truce back to St. Jim's. Promise?"

"We promise."

"All serene!"

And Clive wrapped up the pocket-book and the fountain-pen in his cap, tied it up with string, and pitched the bundle across to the island.

Figgins picked it up.

It was a bitter pill for the Co. to swallow, but there was no help for it. The words dictated by Clive were written out upon a blank sheet, and signed by the three juniors. Then

the pen and the pocket-book were returned in the same manner.

Clive opened it, and read out the confession of surrender:

"We three stupid asses confess ourselves licked, and we beg the pardon of the gentlemen of the School House for having been impertinent to them upon various occasions.

"GEORGE FIGGINS.

"G. F. KERR.

"D. WYNN."

Tom Merry and Clive laughed loud and long.

"Take it, and cut off to the school," said



am of water from the hose drove them back, and in no time red Monty Lewther. "Give 'em a wash—they need it!"

Clive. "The bounders have given their word, but I don't want to tempt them."

"Thank you, Figgins," said Clive politely.

And off went Tom Merry.

"That will do nicely. Now you can have your boat."

And Clive rowed across to the island, and took the three and their tackle aboard.

"Had much sport?" he asked pleasantly.

"No!" was the short reply.

The truce was observed—to the credit of the Co., be it said, for the temptation was strong to pitch the grinning Clive into the river. And it was with doleful faces that the three anglers returned to St. Jim's.

CHAPTER 13.

A Big Mystery!

THE document signed by Figgins & Co. was pasted upon a sheet of cardboard and placed in a gorgeous gilt frame, from which another portrait had been ejected for the purpose.

It hung in Study No. 6, and every junior in the House grinned and chuckled before it time and again.

It was regarded as an irreclaimable confession of inferiority by the New House—a proof in black and white that the School House was the top House of St. Jim's.

The juniors of the New House were, of course, about as wild as they could be. The confession of defeat in their leader's handwriting was a standing humiliation to them, and the jokes of their rivals about it goaded them to fury. Figgy's position was shaken, and he knew that he either had to get that document back or resign leadership. But to penetrate the enemy's fortress was no easy task.

He talked it over with his chums. A night attack could scarcely be carried out without interference by either prefects or masters. And in the daylight it would be impossible to penetrate to Study No. 6 unobserved. At length Figgins decided to go alone upon the enterprise at a late hour, and effect by strategy what could not be done by force.

And a few nights later a golden opportunity occurred. To reach Study No. 6 he would have to pass Kildare's door, and the captain of the school naturally kept his door open after the juniors had gone to bed, to see that none of the juniors came down on surreptitious errands. But upon this particular night Kildare was absent, having been allowed to visit his uncle, who lived at Lancaster. He was to return the following morning. Evidently this was Figgins' opportunity. He was in luck.

As Sefton was just as watchful for delinquent juniors as Kildare, Figgins had decided to leave the dormitory by a rope from the window.

Late that night, when all the juniors were in bed, he slid down the knotted rope and reached the ground.

"All right?" whispered Kerr, from above.

"All right! Watch for me!"

"You bet!"

And Kerr cautiously pulled in the rope.

Figgins, keeping close to the buildings, reached the School House. The door had not yet been closed for the night, and in a few moments Figgins was ascending the dim staircase with cautious steps.

No one was about, and he gained the upper corridor unobserved.

He paused and looked along it. No light came from Kildare's room, but he looked again. Yes; the door was half-open!

Was anybody there? Figgins hesitated, puzzled. At any rate, he was in for it now. With fast-beating heart, he stole along the corridor upon tip-toe.

Then he started as he drew near to Kildare's door; for a sound came from the dark room, which told him that somebody was there.

He stopped, and, acting upon the first impulse that came to him, silently opened one of the study doors on his left and stepped quickly inside. He partly closed the door, keeping it about an inch ajar, and watched the dimly-lit corridor.

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He wanted to see when the coast was clear, so that he could safely proceed. Besides that, his curiosity was aroused, and he was vaguely uneasy. What could anybody want in Kildare's study while he was away, and without a light, too?

He had waited nearly five minutes before a figure emerged from Kildare's room and came silently down the corridor towards the stairs.

As he passed under a light, the startled Figgins obtained a clear view of his features. It was Sefton—with a very pale face.

He passed on quickly and disappeared down the stairs. Figgins came out into the passage, wondering a little. What had Sefton been doing in Kildare's study? What was he doing in the House at all?

Figgins was deeply disturbed. He knew how Sefton hated Kildare. He felt that there was something mysterious afoot, though he could not guess in the least what it was.

As he passed Kildare's study he opened the door and glanced in. The blind was up, and the pale moonlight streamed into the room. He could see nothing unusual in its aspect.

He hurried on. Whatever the mystery was, he felt that he could not fathom it.

A few minutes later he was in Study No. 6. He struck a match, and at once his eyes fell upon the trophy of victory. He took down the frame and carried it to the window, where, in the starlight, which was sufficient for his purpose, he scraped the paper off the cardboard with his pen-knife, destroying almost every vestige of the document of surrender. This done, he took a brush from his pocket, and, dipping it in the inkpot, wrote one word across the scraped board in large capitals:

"RATS!"

He chuckled as he thought of the feelings of Study No. 6 when they viewed it upon the following morning. He restored the frame to its place on the wall and left the study. Five minutes later he had quitted the House as cautiously as he had entered it.

His chums were on the watch at the dormitory window. The knotted rope came sliding down, and Figgins gripped it and climbed steadily to the window, where his chums helped him back into the dormitory.

"All right?" asked Kerr.

"A!"

And Figgins gave a description of his proceedings in Study No. 6.

A chorus of chuckles answered him as the Co. thought of the discomfiture of Clive and his friends on the morrow.

But of the mystery of Sefton, Figgins did not say a word. It was not till he was alone the next day with his two friends that he confided the strange circumstance to Kerr and Wynn. Both were equally amazed.

"It looks awfully queer," Kerr said slowly. "You chose last night to visit Study No. 6 because Kildare was away, and it looks as if Sefton chose it for the same reason."

"Yes, it does. But what could he want there?"

"That's too deep for me," said Fatty Wynn.

"Better keep mum," suggested Kerr. "Sefton didn't want to be seen, and he's likely to cut up rusty if he finds out that you spotted him."

"Yes, that's true enough; but I wish I knew what it all meant. I can't help thinking that there's something underhand in it. Sefton's just

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the chap to bring discredit upon our House and give the School House fellows something to crow about. I wonder what he wanted in Kildare's quarters?"

"Sefton wouldn't have gone there to play a jape like a junior," said Kerr. "He's head prefect of the New House—while Monteith's away, anyhow."

Figgins nodded.

"I know that. But what was he there at all for in that secret way? And why did he look so pale as he came sneaking out? He was there without a light, too."

"Blessed if I can see why!" said Kerr. "Better say nothing about it, though. Sefton's down on us enough already."

Fatty Wynn's plump brows were knitted very thoughtfully. He seemed to be thinking very deeply.

"Well, what do you think, Fatty?" asked Figgins.

"Sausages!" said Fatty Wynn.

"What?"

"Sosses, I think, Figgy! We've only got a shilling for tea, and I think it had better go in sosses. You can get a square meal for a shilling in sosses."

"You silly ass!" said Figgins. "Who's talking about tea?"

"I am; it's tea-time!"

"Fathead! I was talking about Sefton sneaking into Kildare's study last night."

"Oh, blow Sefton! I'm talking about tea. And I think we can't do better than have sosses, considering how low funds are."

"Bow-wow!" growled Figgins.

But the mystery was too deep for Figgins to guess. He had to give it up; and the chums of the New House proceeded to discuss the sausages instead.

CHAPTER 14.

The Missing Banknote!

KILDARE of the Sixth came across the quadrangle, and nodded cheerily to Figgins & Co. as he stepped into the New House.

Kildare was not a frequent visitor in that House while Monteith was away. He was on the worst of terms with Sefton.

Since the scene in the Common-room in the School House, Kildare had exchanged few words with Sefton. He had, indeed, almost forgotten the occurrence. Sefton had not forgotten it, though it suited him to throw a veil over his bitter animosity in public.

Kildare walked along the passage to Sefton's study, his brows a little grim. He had received a message by a fag, asking him to come, and, surprised as he was, he had to come over, quite prepared to be as friendly as it was possible to be with a fellow like Sefton of the Sixth.

The St. Jim's captain tapped at the door.

"Come in!" called out the New House prefect.

Kildare entered the study.

"You wanted to see me, Sefton?" he said.

The New House prefect nodded, his eyes fixing upon Kildare's frank face with a peculiar expression.

"Yes. Sit down, will you?" Sefton's manner was unusually cordial. "I want to speak to you about—"

"I say, Sefton"—Gibbs put his head in at the door—"can you come here a minute? Oh, you're engaged, I see! Excuse me!"

"Don't mind me!" said Kildare.
 "Well, just pardon me a minute, then," said Sefton.

And he went out of the study. In a few minutes he returned.

"Sorry I've kept you waiting," he said.

"That's all right. You were saying—"

"Ah, yes! It strikes me that the ridiculous rivalry between the two Houses is getting out of hand," Sefton went on. "It gets worse every term. It seems to me that it's time the seniors of both Houses put their heads together in a friendly spirit to do something to put a stop to it. Don't you think so?"

"Well," said Kildare slowly, "I don't wholly disapprove of the rivalry, for it keeps the juniors up to the mark in many respects. Still, I admit it's carried too far sometimes. I'm glad, I'm sure, to hear you speak like this, and in the way of friendly co-operation you won't find me backward."

"I don't deny that we have had our rubs," said Sefton, with an air of frankness. "But if you're willing to work with me to put the two Houses on a friendlier footing—why, there's my hand!"

Kildare grasped it warmly.

"You give me a great deal of pleasure by this, Sefton," he said. "I've had some hard thoughts of you at times, but you've set them all at rest now. We'll work together, as you say, and remember only that we belong to good old St. Jim's."

And after a little more friendly talk the captain of the school took his leave.

When he was gone, Sefton's expression changed. A sneering smile dawned upon his face.

"Yes; how nice we can be when we're captain of St. Jim's!" he muttered. "Perhaps we won't be so nice when we're kicked out of it."

A little later Baker, one of the New House seniors, strolled in. He found Sefton looking over the table among the papers and books, with a puzzled and anxious expression upon his face.

"Gibbs asked me to ask you— But what are you looking for, old man?"

"A five-pound note."

"You don't mean to say you've lost one?"

"Well, I laid it on the table half an hour ago, and it's gone."

"Wind blown it about somewhere."

"I've hunted round the room."

"Anybody been in the study?"

"Only Kildare."

"Kildare? What did he want in the New House?" asked Baker, in surprise.

"He came to have a talk with me about keeping the juniors in order, but, of course, he couldn't have taken it!"

"Of course not!" agreed Baker, with a heartiness which made Sefton bite his lip. "Still, you'd better have a jolly good look for it. It's beastly unpleasant for money to get lost, to say the least."

"It would be thundering unpleasant to me," growled Sefton. "I received it only two days ago, and if it's gone, I shall be broke for weeks."

"But it can't be gone."

But a diligent search of the study failed to reveal the missing note. At length the two stopped and stood looking at each other.

"Hang it, Baker, this looks ugly!" said Sefton seriously.

"You're sure you laid it on the table?"

"Yes; I was going to ask Ratty to change it for me, and I put it out ready. Then Kildare



"I'll catch the rat that's doing so much damage here!"

Half-a-crown has been awarded to R. Vickers, 41, Princes Road, Dartford, Kent.

came in. The note was lying there when Gibbs called me out of the study for a minute. I remember now that I didn't notice it when I came back."

"You mean that Kildare—"

"What does it look like? He was alone here, and when I came back the note was gone."

"But it's incredible!"

Sefton shrugged his shoulders.

"Do you know the number of the note?"

"No; but it could be ascertained."

"It's—it's a rotten business!"

"Rotten or not, the note's gone, and there's only one way of accounting for it," said the prefect obstinately. "You can see that for yourself."

Baker made no reply.

"However, don't say anything about it yet. I must think what's to be done. I don't want a scandal if it can be helped, but I can't afford to lose five pounds."

"For goodness' sake, don't be hasty!"

"I won't take any steps at all until this evening. That'll give us time to think it out."

Sefton kept his word. That evening he confided the circumstances to a number of seniors of his own House, and asked their counsel. Almost everyone declared his belief in Kildare's innocence, and advised Sefton to avoid being hasty. It was finally decided that he should go over to the School House and have a quiet talk with Kildare.

"If he gives it back we'll let the matter drop," said Sefton, "although I despise the thief. Yet the poor devil may be hard up. It may have been a sudden temptation to him, which he couldn't resist: and we don't want a scandal."

"I don't know," observed Baker. "If he took it he ought to be shown up. We don't want a thief for captain of St. Jim's. But I don't believe that he took it."

"It looks suspicious," Gibbs remarked, with a shake of the head.

"The difficulty is," Sefton went on, "that a banknote is so easily destroyed. If I speak to Kildare, and he denies that he has it, what am I to do? For then he won't try to pass the note. He'll just burn it, to save himself from danger."

There was a long silence. The seniors looked at each other without knowing what to suggest.

"You'll have to speak to the Head," said Gibbs at last. "If he won't give it up he'll have to be searched before he can make away with it. If he's innocent, that's the only thing that will clear him, and so he can't object."

"Then I won't speak to him in his study. He would call it an insult, and chuck me out, and then burn the note. I'll tackle him in a place where he'll be under a good many eyes. Some of you fellows ought to be at hand to see fair play. He's bound to be in the gym now. I'll speak to him there."

And Sefton went to seek Kildare, followed at an interval by the others.

CHAPTER 15. The Accusation!

THE gym was pretty full.

Tom Merry & Co., Clive, Blake, Herries, and Digby were there, and so were a good many New House juniors, but the presence of the captain and a number of seniors of both Houses kept the rival juniors quiet.

The School House were exasperated by the change which had come over their trophy, and they had had to confess themselves "done" by the daring Figgins. They were in the right humour for a scrimmage, and there would probably have been a tussle in the gym but for the presence of the prefects.

When Sefton entered he walked straight up to Kildare, who was talking with two or three other fellows.

"Can you spare me a few minutes in private?" he asked, coldly and formally.

Kildare looked surprised.

"It is a matter of importance," added Sefton.

"All right, then."

Kildare nodded to his companions, and stepped aside with Sefton. A good many curious glances were directed towards them.

"I dare say you can guess what I want to speak to you about, Kildare?"

"Not in the least!"

"It's about the five-pound note."

"The—the what?"

"You don't understand?"

"I haven't the faintest idea what you are talking about!" said Kildare, with a touch of impatience.

"H'm! When I left you alone in my study this morning, I left a five-pound note lying on the table."

"Well?"

"When I came back it was gone!"

There was no mistaking his tone. Kildare turned crimson, and then deadly pale.

"Do you dare to accuse me?"

"I don't accuse anybody. I want my money back, that's all. If it's given back to me, no more need be said about the matter."

"And you think I took it?"

"Do you want me to speak plainly?"

"Yes."

"Well, I know you took it, then!"

Kildare clenched his hand and half-raised it. Sefton started back, changing colour perceptibly.

"Take care! Violence won't improve your case."

Kildare's hand fell to his side.

"I know it. I shall not use violence—yet. So you're willing to hush the matter up? That's generous of you. I'll show you how much I appreciate your generosity." He turned away, and spoke in a loud, clear voice: "Listen here,

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you fellows. Sefton says that he has lost a five-pound note, and he accuses me of stealing it when I was in his study this morning."

There was a buzz of indignant amazement.

Sefton looked pale and fidgety, and more than one fellow remarked that Sefton looked a good deal more like the accused than the accuser at that moment.

"What do you mean?" demanded several fellows hotly. "Are you off your dot?"

"I mean what I say," replied Sefton, with some firmness. "I didn't want to make the thing public, but since Kildare has chosen to do so, I shall speak out. There was a five-pound note on my table when I left him alone in my study this morning. When I came back a few minutes later, it was gone. I didn't like to believe that he took it, but there's no other way of accounting for its disappearance. I demand an investigation, anyway."

"I have no wish to deny you that," said Kildare. "The suspicion is an insult, for which I shall call you to account later. I do not think that you really believe me guilty."

"He doesn't." It was Clive's voice that spoke. "He doesn't believe it! He lies, and he knows it, and I can prove it!"

Kildare looked at the excited junior in amazement. Sefton ground his teeth.

"What do you know about it, youngster?" asked Kildare.

"I know that Sefton hates you, and I know that he has plotted to get you into disgrace."

"You internally cheeky rascal!" began Sefton.

"Hold your tongue!" said Kildare fiercely.

"Now, Clive, just explain how you know all this."

"I heard Sefton plotting with Gibbs," answered Clive unhesitatingly.

Instantly every eye turned upon Gibbs. He had turned white.

"Look at him!" said Clive triumphantly. "Do you want any more proof than his face?"

"You insolent rascal!" hissed Gibbs. "You startled me with your lies, but—"

"I'll startle you a bit more before I'm done!"

"Go on, Clive," said Kildare.

And Clive went on to tell all that he had heard that day behind the hedge. There was a loud murmur when he had finished.

"What have you to say to that, Sefton?"

"Lies!" answered the New House senior. "You all know that there's never been any love lost between Kildare and me, and I may have run him down in speaking of him; but certainly I've never said any more than that. I suppose that little hound caught a few words and misunderstood them, and imagination supplied the rest."

It was a good defence, well and coolly spoken. The listeners exchanged doubtful glances.

"I wasn't alone," said Clive quickly. "Blake was with me; he heard all that I heard."

"Do you corroborate his statement, Blake?"

"Every word of it!" Blake answered promptly.

"Of course he does!" sneered Sefton.

Kildare reflected for a few minutes. Then he spoke in clear tones:

"This matter has got to be thoroughly sifted out. I am going straight to the Head. Sefton, will you kindly come and repeat your accusation in his presence? Clive and Blake had better come, too."

And as Kildare walked towards the door a loud cheer burst forth, testifying to the trust the boys of St. Jim's reposed in their captain.

CHAPTER 16. Innocent or Guilty?

THERE was a deep and painful silence in the study of the kind old Head.

The Head of St. Jim's looked from one to the other of the boys before him, almost doubting his ears.

Had he heard aright? Eric Kildare accused of theft—Kildare, the honest and generous captain of the school, the best-liked fellow at St. Jim's, and the one for whom the Head felt the most esteem!

"It is a horrible mistake, I am convinced of that!" the Head said at length in a low voice.

The Head coughed uneasily. He could not but recognise that there was more than a "mistake" here, and that one side or the other was deliberately lying.

"Blake, kindly inform Mr. Ratcliff and Mr. Railton that I wish to see them in my study."

The two Housemasters, considerably surprised and wondering, came in answer to the summons.

"Kindly step into the next room for a few minutes, boys. Don't go away. Wait till I call you."

They obeyed. The door closed.

"Please sit down, gentlemen!" said the Head. "I want to consult you upon a very painful subject."



Watching through the partly open door, Figgins saw a figure emerge from Kildare's study and pass silently down the passage. For a moment the junior had a clear view of his features. It was Sefton! What had the New House prefect been doing in Kildare's study?

Then he looked doubtfully at Clive. "Clive, are you quite sure that you have correctly reported the words used by Sefton and Gibbs—that you have not allowed your dislike of Sefton to lead you to imagine—"

He paused, his kindly but keen grey eyes reading the face of the junior.

Clive's reply was respectful, but very firm.

"I am quite sure, sir."

"And you deny it all, Sefton?"

"Absolutely, sir!" Sefton had gone too far now to recede, and he had no choice but to brazen it out. "Clive perhaps caught a few words, and his imagination did the rest. Most of the School House fellows take it for granted that I am jealous of Kildare's position, and Clive, in particular, hates me."

And he informed them of what had taken place. They listened in amazement.

"This is terrible!" said Mr. Railton. "It is impossible that Kildare can be a thief!"

"And yet," said Mr. Ratcliff, "it is surely impossible that any boy could be wicked enough to bring such an accusation without grounds. Sefton must, at least, believe what he says; he cannot be actuated simply by dislike and jealousy of Kildare."

"But what of Clive's story?"

"Sefton's explanation is reasonable."

"Excuse me," said Mr. Railton. "I can speak upon that point. I can vouch for Clive's truthfulness. Upon at least one occasion I know he risked punishment rather than tell a lie."

The Head passed his hand across his brow.

"What is to be done?" he asked.

It was a difficult question.

"The only course to be taken, it seems to me," said Mr. Raiton slowly, "is to search Kildare and his belongings."

"That is rather a distasteful procedure."

"Yes, no doubt; but it is the only way to prove either his innocence or his guilt. I understand that since the accusation he has had no opportunity of disposing of the stolen note, if it is in his possession; therefore, if he has it, a search will reveal it. For his own sake, I advocate this painful course."

"My opinion exactly," agreed Mr. Ratcliff.

"I suppose you are right," said the Head slowly. "Call in the boys, please."

The boys came back into the study. The Head was very pale and perturbed. He wiped his pince-nez and put them on.

"Kildare," he said, with an effort, "have you any objection to a search being made?"

Kildare coloured deeply.

"I have no objection to anything that you consider advisable, sir," he answered quietly.

"My desire is, of course, to prove your innocence. I cannot believe that you are guilty."

"Thank you, sir!" said Kildare gratefully.

"That shall be done, then."

The Head looked at the two Housemasters. Both drew back from the unpleasant task. Finally, the Head rang for Taggles.

The porter looked astonished when he learned what he was required to do. But, under the Head's orders, he searched Kildare thoroughly. The captain submitted with quiet calmness. But no banknote was forthcoming.

"We shall now proceed to Kildare's study," said the Head.

As they went upstairs the eyes of many seniors and juniors were upon them. A crowd followed the Head, and waited in painful silence in the long, wide corridor to hear the result of the search. Clive, Blake, and Sefton remained in the corridor with the rest, only the masters entering the room with Kildare. The door was left open, however, so Clive could see Taggles making the search.

A quarter of an hour passed painfully slowly. Desk and drawers and papers were gone through without result. Kildare stood calm, proud, and confident. The masters' looks were more anxious than his.

The search, at a sign from the Head, was extended to the bookcase. Hateful as the whole affair was, the Head considered it best to be thorough. If the stolen note was concealed anywhere in Kildare's room, it was best to bring it to light.

Taggles took down the books one by one and shook them, so that any paper between the leaves would fall out. He came to a huge "Foxe's Book of Martyrs" a present to Kildare from an aunt, and which Kildare had probably never once read. As Taggles shook this volume, something white fell out and fluttered to the floor. A tremor ran over everyone present. Was it a book-mark or—a banknote?

It was a banknote!

Taggles picked it up in silence and handed it to the Head. Dr. Holmes took it with fingers that visibly trembled.

"Sefton!"

The prefect stepped into the room.

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"What was the number of the note you lost?"

"I did not observe it, sir; but it can easily be ascertained. I can write home—"

"It is not necessary," said Kildare in a strange, dry voice. "That banknote is not mine, Dr. Holmes!"

"You admit that it is not yours?"

"I state that it is not."

"You confess—"

"I confess nothing. I swear that I never saw that note before—that I do not know who placed it in my book!"

Kildare's look was dazed, almost wild. He seemed utterly shaken by the finding of the note. Was this a sign of conscious guilt?

He collected himself with an effort.

"Dr. Holmes, you don't believe this? You don't believe me a thief?"

"Heaven knows I am sorry, Kildare, to— But how came Sefton's banknote in your room—and hidden away so carefully?" said the Head.

Kildare pressed his hand to his forehead. What could he answer? The silence was terrible. At last he spoke.

"I—I cannot explain. I—I did not put it there."

The Head shook his head slowly, and made a movement to turn away.

"Stop, sir! I—I believe I can tell you who put it there! It is a plot! It is done to ruin me!"

"I should counsel you not to make so serious an accusation hastily, Kildare. You allude to Sefton?"

Sefton sneered.

"It is easy to say that!" he exclaimed. "You know very well, sir, that if anybody belonging to the New House came rummaging round the School House he would be spotted at once."

"Yes, that is certainly so," said Mr. Raiton.

Kildare had now recovered his calmness.

"I am innocent!" he said firmly. "No doubt Sefton chose his moment for coming here—probably last night, when I was away from St. Jim's."

The Head turned a troubled look upon Sefton. He did not know what to believe.

"What were you doing last evening, Sefton?"

The prefect appeared to consider.

"I was in the gym up to nine o'clock," he said. "After that I talked awhile with Baker; then I played chess in my study till bed-time with Gibbs."

Kildare's eyes flashed.

"Gibbs!" he exclaimed. "You hear that, sir? That is no alibi. It was Gibbs whom Clive heard him plotting with! Gibbs is his accomplice!"

"It's a lie!" growled Sefton.

"What am I to believe?" exclaimed the Head. "Go now; leave me! I must think the matter over."

And he went to his study, accompanied by the Housemasters, his brow deeply lined.

The result of the search was a big shock to St. Jim's. In most minds the finding of the note seemed to clinch the matter. Even Clive was staggered for a moment. But his faith in Kildare held true. It was a conspiracy, and Tom Merry & Co. felt sure of it.

Sefton went back to the New House, looking grave and concerned, taking care to let no sign of triumph appear in his face. But in truth, his triumph was mingled with deep uneasiness, and he was far from being satisfied.

CHAPTER 17.
Brought to Light!

WHILE St. Jim's was discussing the discovery of the banknote in Kildare's study, and arguing for or against his innocence with an excitement which knew no abatement, there was one junior who kept apart from the rest, his mind in a tumult of doubt and fear and horror.

It was George Figgins.

Back to his memory had come vividly the scene of the previous night—of Sefton coming out of Kildare's study, with white face and stealthy footsteps, and creeping away down the corridor like a thief in fear of detection.

What had he been doing in Kildare's room?

Figgins had asked himself that question the night before without being able to find an answer. But now, what a flood of ghastly light was thrown upon it!

What had Sefton been doing there? Was it not only too evident what he had been doing? He had been placing the banknote in Kildare's book—a book which he knew the St. Jim's captain was not likely to open—and the next day he had asked Kildare over to his quarters, and pretended to miss the note when he was gone.

Figgins, with his pride in the House he belonged to, would naturally have been very slow to believe the accusation Tom Merry & Co. were freely making against the New House prefect—only firmly fixed in his mind was the picture of Sefton slinking out of Kildare's study like a thief in the night.

What should he do? If he denounced Sefton it was black shame for his House. He shuddered at the thought of it.

He was very pale and perturbed when he called his two chums aside to tell them his decision. Both Kerr and Wynn were looking disturbed. They had not forgotten what Figgy had told them, and he saw that their conclusions were the same as his own.

"We must speak out," Figgins said, in a hurried and agitated voice. "You know very well what Sefton was doing when I saw him last night."

Kerr nodded.

"It looks like it."

"It will be a horrible disgrace to the New House," said Fatty Wynn. "It will give those rotters a fearful pull over us."

"That can't be helped. We should be cads to be silent and let Kildare suffer."

"Sefton's our prefect."

"Yes; but he's guilty."

"Who's guilty?"

It was Tom Merry's voice. He passed the Co. as they stood in conclave, and he had caught the last word.

"Look here, Merry——"

Tom Merry clenched his fists.

"Not a word against Kildare! Do you hear? I'll——"

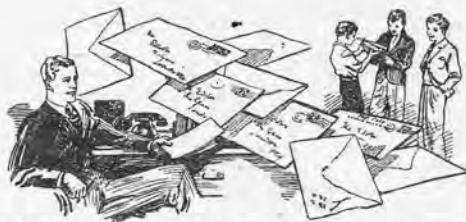
"Don't be an ass, Merry! I tell you Kildare's innocent! We know it! I'm going to the Head."

"What?"

Figgins poured out what he knew. Tom listened open-mouthed, and grasped Figgins' arm.

"Come on! Come to the Head!"

(Continued on next page.)



THE
EDITOR'S
CHAIR.

Let the Editor be your pal.
Drop him a line to-day,
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Street, London, E.C.4.

HALLO, chums! It's surprising how varied are the tastes of readers for school stories.

I get hundreds of letters, and nearly every reader tells me which particular yarn he or she has enjoyed most. Of those published this year I think almost every one of them has been voted the best. According to my notes the most popular yarns were those of the recent "Talbot" series—with "Talbot Takes the Blame" receiving most votes.

I am always interested to know which yarns readers like best; so when you drop me a line just mention the one you liked most this year.

But, whatever type of story you favour, there can be no doubt that all readers will greatly enjoy

"LEVISON'S REVENGE!"

which will be in your hands next Wednesday. It is a sparkling story, full of fun and excitement.

Having been punished by Mr. Ratcliff for a delinquency, Ernest Levison sets out to get revenge, and he soon thinks of a cunning scheme. Unfortunately for Tom Merry & Co., their celebrated "Weekly" is involved in Levison's plot, and there is a minor sensation when the latest number of the paper is found to contain an insulting limerick about "Ratty." The Head is very angry, and "Tom Merry's Weekly" is threatened with extinction unless the juniors can prove that the limerick was inserted without their knowledge and consent. It is not easy to do this without giving away Levison. What happens? You will see when you read this splendid yarn.

"THE BOY WITHOUT A FRIEND!"

Mark Linley has been little in the limelight since he first came to Greyfriars, but in Frank Richards' next story the mill-boy from Lancashire plays the leading part.

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All the GEM's other popular features will again be well up to their usual high standard, completing another tip-top number.

Cheerio till next week!

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He hurried Figgins away breathlessly, unconsciously keeping the grip on his arm. Kerr and Wynn followed.

Dr. Holmes started as a loud knock came at his door.

Tom Merry hurried in, almost dragging the breathless Figgins.

The Head adjusted his pince-nez, and stared at them in an amazement that was shared by Mr. Railton and Mr. Ratcliff.

"What does this mean, Merry?"

"Kildare's innocent, sir, and Figgins can prove it!" panted Tom Merry.

"What do you say?"

"Tell him, Figgy."

And Figgins told his story.

The Head's troubled face grew darker and darker as he listened.

"Did you tell this to anyone at the time, Figgins?"

"Yes, sir; to Kerr and Wynn."

"He did, sir," said both those juniors at once.

The Head passed his hand across his brow.

"I believe you, my boys. Thank Heaven this revelation has come before any greater wrong than suspicion was done to Kildare! I must see him at once, and—also Sefton. What a depth of duplicity and wickedness that unhappy lad has been guilty of! Merry, tell Kildare I wish to see him."

The juniors left the study. Outside, Tom turned to Figgins and gripped his hand.

"I say, old man, this is ripping of you! And—I and I'll tell you what—if you like to call the New House the Cock House of St. Jim's for the rest of the term, you can do it, and I'll see that nobody on this side has anything to say."

And then Tom Merry tore off to seek Kildare.

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The captain of St. Jim's was in his study in a mood of the deepest dejection. He had made up his mind, sadly enough, that he must leave St. Jim's.

Tom burst in upon him like a whirlwind.

"Kildare, old chap, you're innocent—I mean, your innocence has been proved, and the Head wants to see you."

Eric Kildare started up.

"Who's proved it—how?" he asked, in astonishment.

"Figgins of the New House!" exclaimed Tom. "It's cleared up now. It was Sefton did the trick; it's proved. You're to go to the Head at once. The Head and Mr. Railton are waiting for you."

Kildare's handsome face lighted up.

He gave Tom an expressive look, and hurried from the study.

There was a crowd in the passage.

Tom Merry's excited voice had been heard far and wide, and Figgins & Co. had told their story to a swarm of curious ears. All the School House knew now that Kildare was innocent—that his innocence had been proved. There was a roar as he came out of the study.

"Hurrah!"

"Good old Kildare!"

An elegant figure with a gleaming eyeglass came speeding along the passage.

It was Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. The swell of the Fourth was just out of the sanatorium, and that was the first news he had heard—that Kildare had been accused of theft, and that his innocence was already proved.

Arthur Augustus clapped the captain of St. Jim's on the back—a great liberty for a junior to take, but excusable in the circumstances.

"Buck up, Kildare, deah boy! We're all backin' you up," said Arthur Augustus. "Don't be downhearted, you know. Wely on me."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, you fellows—"

"Bravo, Kildare!"

The captain of St. Jim's hurried on to the Head's study.

"Thank goodness it's all come out!" exclaimed Sidney Clive, with a deep breath. "Of course, I never doubted Kildare for one moment."

Kildare's interview in the Head's study was brief, and he came away with a cheerful face.

Sefton's interview which followed was longer, and not so agreeable. An hour later Sefton of the Sixth left St. Jim's, and Gibbs went with him. The bully of the New House had looked his last on the old school.

When Monteith returned to St. Jim's, and resumed his place as head prefect of the New House, he found Sefton gone; and when he heard the reason, he was not sorry.

Both Houses fully agreed that St. Jim's was better off without Sefton.

The clearing of Kildare's name caused immense rejoicing in the School House.

Tom Merry & Co. held a great celebration in the study, at which there were two guests of honour—Figgins of the New House, and Sidney Clive, the boy from South Africa.

(Next Wednesday: "LEVISON'S REVENGE!" The black sheep of the Fourth is on the warpath—and his victim is the sour-tempered Mr. Ratcliff. Don't miss the fun and excitement. See that your GEM is reserved for you.)



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PEN PALS COUPON

2-4-38

THE GREYFRIARS SAILORS HELD UP BY MASKED PIRATES!

The Pirates of Pegg!

By FRANK RICHARDS.

(Author of the grand long yarns of Greyfriars appearing every Saturday in our companion paper, the "Magnet.")

WHAT HAPPENED LAST WEEK.

Granted a day's holiday at Greyfriars, Harry Wharton & Co. decide to spend the time cruising in their schooner, the *Marjorie*. Wharton has formed a sailor cadet corps in the *Remove*, and, thanks to the generosity of his uncle, he has obtained possession of an old schooner. It is anchored in Pegg Bay, with Captain Stump, a wooden-legged seaman, in command.

The *Remove* sailors march down to Pegg, where they have a "spot of bother" with a patrol of Boy Scouts, who are headed by a youth named Trumper. But the juniors soon overcome them, and proceed to go aboard the schooner.

They are joined by one of the Scouts, Dicky Brown, who has deserted the patrol. He offers to pilot the schooner on its cruise, and Wharton agrees. Trumper & Co. try to board the vessel to capture their deserter, but once again they come off worst against the *Remove* sailors.

Then the *Marjorie* weighs anchor and sets sail.

(Now read on.)

Under Sail!

THE ambitions of the Greyfriars sailors began to rise as the *Marjorie* put to sea.

Instead of a sail round the bay in the schooner, some of the more daring spirits suggested a run out into the English Channel.

But Wharton was captain, and he had too much cool sense to allow himself to be persuaded into real recklessness.

The schooner was sound enough for a sail on the bay, but she was by no means in a state to brave the English Channel, nor were her crew as yet sufficiently trained to handle her there.

A sudden squall would have meant destruction to the schooner and all her crew, and a squall was quite within the bounds of probability.

"We'll stick to the bay," said Wharton, though if he had consulted his inclinations, he would gladly have turned the schooner seaward to the illimitable blue. "It's big enough for us. We shall have a jolly sail, and we can anchor somewhere for lunch."

"Good wheeze!" said Bob Cherry. "I've heard that there are all sorts of little coves and nooks in the Shoulder."

"It would be a good idea to explore that cove over there," said Harry Wharton, pointing. "And Dicky Brown can pilot us."

"What-ho!" said Dicky Brown, the Pegg Boy Scout. "I've been round the Shoulder in boats since I was six years old, and I know every foot of it. I can pilot you all right."

The schooner was gliding gaily along, with a brisk breeze filling out the sails. Bob Cherry was steering, and Dicky Brown stood beside him. Wharton was giving directions for the ship to be made what Captain Stump called "all ataunto"—and there was a great deal to be done in that line.

In the midst of the general busy animation, THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,572.

voices were heard in fierce dispute from the cook's quarters.

"Hallo, rowing already!" said Nugent. "Stop that row, there!"

"I say, you fellows—" came Billy Bunter's voice.

"Shut up!"

"Oh, really, Nugent—"

"You have to say 'sir' in addressing an officer."

"I'm sorry, but—"

"Well, don't jaw."

"But I say, you fellows—" Bunter's face, red and excited, was projected into view. He was blinking indignantly through his spectacles. "I say, I'm cook on this craft, aren't I? Then yank this heathen out!"

"What's the matter with Wun Lung?"

"The heathen rotter is interfering with the cooking. There's no room for two cooks here."

"Hold on! What have you got for lunch?"

"Irish stew," said Bunter, with a fat look of satisfaction. "And it's going to be ripping."

"Have you got it on the stove?"

"Yes; it's all right now. It only wants watching."

"Then Wun Lung can watch it, and you can come and do the painting."

"Oh, really, Nugent—"

"You say 'sir' in addressing an officer."

"Oh, really, sir—"

"Tumble up, there!" roared Nugent. "No back talk! Who's mate of this ship, I'd like to know? Do you want me to talk to you with a belaying pin, you lazy, lubberly slabsided son of a sea cook? Tumble up, there!"

"But I say, you fellows—"

"Tumble up! You idling swab, do you want to be keelhauled? I'll make you squirm! Tumble up!"

And Billy Bunter tumbled up, as Nugent seized a rope and rushed towards him. Nugent was soon falling into the way of seafaring. He had a flow of language already that would have done credit to any mate in the merchant service.

"I say, Wharton—" began Billy Bunter, in a last despairing appeal.

"Obey orders!" said Wharton severely.

And the fat junior had to obey.

Bunter the Painter!

BILLY BUNTER blinked round in search of the paint. Micky Desmond had been mixing it, and there was a bucket half-full, ready. Nugent thrust a big brush into it, and took Bunter by the back of the neck and guided him to the spot.

"Now get to work, my lad."

"Look here, Nugent—"

"Sir!"

"I mean sir. I'm not going—"

"Trice him up to the mainbrace, and give him three dozen!" roared Nugent.

The crew didn't know what the mainbrace was, so they did not obey; but there was no need,

STARRING HARRY WHARTON & CO. IN FUN AND THRILLS AT SEA.

as Bunter hastened to carry out his orders. He picked up the bucket of paint in one hand and the brush in the other.

"Where am I to paint?" he asked feebly.

"The outside of the bulwarks, of course."

"But I can't lean over far enough."

"Try, ass!"

"But—but if I lean over, my spectacles will very likely fall off, and—and if they get lost, you'll have to pay for them, you know."

"You sling a wooden step over the side to paint from," said Russell. "Then it's easy enough. Go it, Bunter, and we'll all take our turn!"

"I—I'd rather you started, Russell."

"I'm busy splicing the mainbrace."

"The—the what?"

"Are you going to start that painting, my man?" bawled Nugent.

"Ye-es; I'm just going to, Nugent. Don't be impatient."

"Tumble up, then, you sea cook!"

Two slings, with a wooden plank resting between them, were quickly made and put over the side, and Billy Bunter was lodged safely upon the plank, with the bucket and the brush.

"Now paint away!" roared Nugent.

"Look here, Nugent—"

"I'm looking; and I'll come down with a rope's end if you don't buckle to!"

Bunter dipped the brush deep in the paint and loaded it, and drew it out with a sweep of the arm.

Nugent gave a roar. Whether intentionally or not, Bunter had sent a shower of drops over him, and his face and smart cap were smothered.

"Oh!" gasped Nugent. "I'll—I'll pulverise him!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What are you cackling at, you dummies? There's nothing funny in being smothered with paint by a howling maniac!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, shut up! Cackling like a lot of old hens in a farmyard! Silence, fore and aft, or I'll be among you with a belaying pin!" shouted Nugent, remembering that he was second mate.

Billy Bunter, a little comforted by smothering his tormentor, painted away industriously at the grimy wood.

The ship was gliding smoothly along on calm waters; propelled by a soft breeze—very soft and mild for the time of the year.

Bunter painted away, getting very nearly as much paint on himself as on the woodwork, and the sling was shifted along from above as he finished one spot and started on another.

"I say, I'm getting to the end of this paint!" sang out Bunter presently. "I suppose somebody else had better begin with the next lot."

"Let's see how much you've done first," said Nugent. He had cleaned off the paint, and looked fresh and rosy from a wash, as he leaned over the rail. "I don't suppose you've done your little bit yet. Why, you lazy swab, you've done hardly anything!"

"I've used up nearly all this bucket."

"Yes; but it wasn't half-full, and you've been wasting it. What do you mean by wasting valuable paint on your own clothes?"

"I—I couldn't help it."

"That's all very well. I've a jolly good mind to have you put in irons for surreptitiously making away with the ship's stores," said Nugent severely.



The Removites turned pale as rifles appeared in view in the hands of the masked, cloaked crew of the pirate boat. "Let them come aboard, Wharton," muttered Trevor. "Better to yield than be sorry afterwards!"

"Oh, really, Nugent—"

"Just you finish that bucket, and then you can begin on another."

"Look here—"

"Oh, buckle to, or I'll have you triced up to the main-arm—I mean yard-brace—that is to say—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"If you cackle at your officer, Micky Desmond, I'll stop your grog for a week, you swab! Get on with the painting, Bunter! Let's see how much you've got left."

Nugent leaned over the side. At the same moment, Bunter raised the full brush—and brush met face!

Nugent gave a throttled yell.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Bunter. "That was an accident, you know."

"Ow! It's in my mouth! Gr-r-r! It's in my nose! I'm poisoned! Yah! Ow! Gr-r-r-r! Help!"

The crew of the schooner roared with laughter. Nugent, blinded and choked, danced wildly about the deck, and the Greyfriars sailors simply yelled. But Desmond, for one, left off laughing when Nugent seized him and rubbed the paint off against his chest.

"Arrah! And phwat are yez aafter intirely?" yelled Micky, struggling in the grasp of his superior officer.

"I'm—groo—I'm rubbing off—gr-r-r—paint!" gurgled Nugent. "Keep still, you mutinous rotter—gr-r-r—there, that's better!"

"You baste! You've ruined my beautiful blue jacket intirely."

"Serve you jolly well right, for cackling at your officer!"

"Sure, and I—"

"Order, there!" shouted Wharton, as Micky Desmond danced up to the second mate with brandished fists. "No mutiny aboard this craft."
 "Faith, and he's spoiled my illigant jacket!"
 "I'll spoil your alligant features if you mutiny."

"I say, you fellows, I've finished this paint!" sang out Bunter.

"Right-ho!" said Nugent, with a vengeful gleam in his eyes. "I'll give you another lot."

There was a second lot ready, and Nugent yanked it to the side.

It was a large pot, and it was full of paint, thinned down to proper consistency for use. Bunter looked up expectantly as Nugent brought it over the rail—and the next moment there was a terrific gasp, like escaping steam.

Nugent had given him the pot of paint, but he had inverted it, and the pot settled over Billy Bunter's head, like a hat.

The paint rolled down his cheeks—and the crew of the Marjorie shrieked with laughter.

"There you are!" shouted Nugent. "That's what you've asked for."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bunter was shrieking, too, but not with laughter. He reeled away, fell off the plank, and splashed down into the sea, his hair and face streaming with paint. In a moment a couple of juniors had jumped in, and were supporting him.

"Br-r-r! Gr-r-r-r!"

That was all Bunter said.

The yelling crew dragged the unhappy painter and his rescuers aboard. Bunter sat on the deck, streaming with water and paint. Nugent and Trevor had gone in for him, and they were dripping, too; but roaring with laughter as well. Bunter did not feel inclined to laugh. He sat and gasped and panted. He could not see, for his eyes were full of paint and water, and his spectacles opaque with paint.

"You—you beasts! Yah! I—I'm sorry I consented to be cook on this rotten craft! Yah! Gr-r-r!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Nugent, you're a rotten beast! I——"

"My hat!" said Nugent. "I suppose you call that gratitude, Bunter. After I've dived in to save your life."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Beast! Yah! Gr-r-r-r!"

"Oh, go below and clean yourself!" said Nugent. "I don't expect gratitude, but——"

"Br-r-r-r!"

And Billy Bunter staggered below to clean himself, and was not seen again till lunch-time.

The Black Flag!

BANG!

The crew of the Marjorie jumped, and no wonder. Every able seaman stopped his work, Bob Cherry let go the wheel, and the painter who was in Bunter's place dropped his brush into the sea.

Bang!

"What on earth is it?" shouted Harry Wharton.

"It's an explosion in the galley."

"Something's gone wrong with the stove."

Bang, bang!

There was a rush towards the cook's quarters. Wharton was in the lead, and he burst in excitedly, prepared to find Wun Lung in a

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desperate state. But the little Chinese was sitting calmly on a box, with an iron bar in his hand, which he was crashing upon an iron saucepan.

Bang, bang!

"Stop that!" shouted Wharton. "What the dickens are you making that terrific din for?"

The little Chinese grinned agreeably.

"Me stlikee gong," he said. "Stlikee gong to callee to dinner."

And he banged again.

"Ow! Hold that fearful row! Your beastly gong can be heard as far as Friardale!" exclaimed Wharton. "Why couldn't you call us?"

"Stlikee gong, ploper way."

"Well, you've struck it enough now—dry up!"

And the little Celestial somewhat unwillingly relinquished the bar. But the scent of the stew was enough to put the crew of the schooner in a good humour again.

It was a splendid stew, and Bunter had put into it nearly everything eatable on board the Marjorie. Wun Lung had watched over it with fatherly care, and cooked it to perfection.

The keen sea breeze had made the juniors very hungry, and they were quite ready for a solid meal.

"Bring it on deck," said Wharton, and he rapped out orders.

The crew was learning to obey smartly. Some of the hands carried up plates, others dishes, and dinner was laid on the deck. Billy Bunter came up with a sour expression on his newly-washed face. His hair was still sticky with the paint he had been unable to remove.

But he forgot everything at the sight of a huge tureen full of rich stew. His little round eyes glistened behind his spectacles.

"I say, you fellows, this is ripping! I think I'm about the hungriest, so you may as well serve me first."

And Billy Bunter was soon busy.

"Here, some of you, come and relieve me at the wheel!" called out Bob Cherry.

But they were all too busy.

"It's all right!" called out Dicky Brown. "We're in deep water, and you can lash the wheel for a bit."

And Bob Cherry did so, and joined the feasters.

The schooner was out in the middle of the wide, sweeping bay, with deep water curling round her bows, and the shore was dim and distant.

The juniors all gave their attention to the stew, and they enjoyed it. There was enough and to spare, and in the enjoyment of it Billy Bunter forgot the bonneting with the paint-pot. A fat and greasy smile came over his face, with an effect that was quite curious along with the streaks and smudges of paint that remained there.

The feast over, the crew of the Marjorie felt much more satisfied with themselves and things generally.

They lay about the schooner, on the planks, in various attitudes of easy comfort, and chatted together cheerily.

Harry Wharton rose from the meal with his usual activity, and was inclined to recommence sailor training at once.

But he found himself in a minority of one, even the two mates not being very enthusiastic about the training just at the moment.

"No slacking!" said Harry briskly. "Come

on! Tumble up and lay hold of the ropes. You don't know how to 'bout ship yet."

"I don't believe you do, either!" grunted Trevor

"I'm learning—Captain Stump is teaching us, isn't he?" said the youthful skipper of the Marjorie mildly. "Training tells, you know."

"Well, give us a rest first."

"No slacking, lads."

"Oh, I believe you go by clockwork, Wharton," yawned Russell who had his head resting against a cask, and his legs outstretched in an attitude that was very comfortable, but could hardly be considered elegant. "Give us a chance! We're only common or garden mortals, you know."

"Faith, ye're right! It was a grand stew intirely, and it makes a gossoon inclined to take things aisy for a bit, ye know."

"Come on, Cherry and Nugent!" exclaimed Harry. "Set an example to the crew, and if they don't follow it we'll touch them up with a rope's end."

Bob Cherry yawned.

"Just a few minutes, Harry!"

"What! You slacking, too!"

"Not exactly slacking, but I've been steering for hours, you know—and that was a jolly good dinner!"

"I say, Nugent—"

"Don't speak to me for an hour or two," murmured Nugent, who was lying on his back with his hands under his head. "I'm comfy."

"What an example to the crew!"

"Blow the crew!"

"Here, Captain Stump, you get up and make a start!"

"Bust my topsails!" said Captain Stump. "I've got a touch of the rheumatiz come back, and if you'll 'skuse me—"

Harry Wharton laughed.

"Oh, you're a set of slackers! Take a rest if you like, I'll steer."

"Good!" said Bob Cherry. "You'll be happy so long as you're doing something. Keep her head larboard and starboard, and—"

"Oh, cheese it!"

And Wharton went to the wheel. Billy Bunter, who had eaten enough for six or seven fellows, was already snoring. The crew of the schooner enjoyed a rest in the spring sunshine, while Wharton stood at the wheel.

It was a glorious day, with a soft southerly wind and a bright warm sun. The sea rolled calmly, and the voyage was very enjoyable. The Greyfriars sailors felt that the cadet corps was more a success than ever.

The great rocky Shoulder was looming up closer ahead.

Wharton swept the sea with his glance occasionally. Out on the blue water showed up steamer after steamer. But the bay was clear of craft, the pleasure boats near the shore lost to view against the high rocks.

But suddenly Wharton gave a start.

Round the rocks of the Shoulder a sail came into view—a big, brown sail, evidently belonging to a fishing craft.

It was a broad deep boat of a heavy build, but it ran lightly enough through the curling water, with that single huge sail drawing in the breeze.

But it was not the light gliding of the boat, or the bellying brown sail that attracted Wharton's glance. He had a passing thought that the boat was well-manned. But what caught his attention was the ensign that streamed from the peak.

He looked, and then he rubbed his eyes and looked again.

There was no mistake about it. It was no ensign known to the Royal Navy or to the Merchant Service. It was the black flag!

There it flew gaily in the breeze—the emblem of piracy, with the skull and crossbones upon it, plain for all to see.

And Wharton, almost letting go of the wheel in amazement, stared at it spellbound.

Boarded by Pirates!

WHARTON could see nothing so far of the strange craft but the heavy bows, the big brown sail, and the piratical flag fluttering from the peak. Of the crew he could not get a glimpse.

He found his voice at last.

"Tumble up, there! All hands on deck!"

There was a general yawning, and a snore from Billy Bunter. Some of the crew of the schooner looked lazily round at the excited steersman.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! What's the matter!"

"The black flag!"

"The black which?"

"Pirates!"

"Oh, don't be funny!"

"I tell you it's the black flag! Tumble up!"

They tumbled up then in earnest. Even Billy Bunter woke and sat up, and groped for his spectacles. The rest of the juniors sprang to their feet.

The strange craft was making to cross the bows of the schooner, and drawing rapidly nearer.

She was in full sight of all, and the black flag fluttering in the breeze was not to be mistaken.

"The black flag!"

"Pirates!"

"My only hat!"

"It's some joke," said Mark Linley. "A jape to scare us."

Harry Wharton laughed.

"Well, I don't suppose they're real pirates, I suppose it's a boat-load of practical jokers. Curious we can't see them, though."

"They're keeping down out of sight."

"That's it," said Russell. "Hiding below the gunwale! I don't quite catch on to this. It can't be the Pegg Scouts again, can it?"

"It might be."

"Or—or—surely it can't be—be—"

"Real pirates?"

"Well, we've got watches, you know, and a tidy sum of money between us, and there's no help to be had," said Russell slowly. "A set of ruffians might easily get a fishing boat and run us down here to rob us, come to think of it."

"Phew!" said Trevor.

"Faith, and it's right ye are! They aren't pirates, but they might easily be a lot of long-shore thieves from the port up the coast."

Harry Wharton looked serious. It was possible, though the hoisting of the black flag looked more like a "jape" than anything else.

"We'll jolly soon see!" he exclaimed. "I can make them out from the maintop with a telescope."

"Good wheeze!"

Two or three juniors promptly climbed to the maintop, Wharton first. Then Harry swept the sea with the telescope.

With the schooner pitching a good deal beneath him, and the strange sail gliding along at a great rate, it was not very easy for him to get his focus. But he aimed the telescope correctly at last, and the black-flagged boat rushed large upon his field of vision.

From his perch he could see into the boat, where the big brown sail did not obstruct the view.

He started as he saw the interior. For there were a dozen or more figures in the boat, crouching in the cover of the gunwale, and each of them had a black mask on his face.

Masked men—in a boat flying the emblem of piracy.

Wharton descended to the deck, his face serious. The crew of the strange boat had observed him, and they gave up further attempt at concealment. They sprang into view, showing over the gunwale, and there was a general gasp from the deck of the *Marjorie* as the row of masked faces came into sight.

"Masked!"

"They can't be real pirates!"

The juniors watched the strange craft with fast-beating hearts. It was almost certain that it was a jape, and Wharton was too proud to fly, even if there had been real danger. The schooner forged on slowly, and the stranger drew rapidly nearer.

"I say, suppose we buzz off," said Hazeldene. "No harm in giving them a run."

"That craft is quite as swift as ours," said Bob Cherry, "and they're handling it well."

"Still, we could—"

Harry Wharton shook his head decidedly.

"We're not going to run," he said. "It's pretty clear that they mean to board us—if they can. All hands prepare to repel boarders!"

The crew of the schooner armed themselves with mops, but half-heartedly. They were too mystified to put the same spirit into the thing they had shown when attacked by the *Scouts of Pegg*.

The strangers, besides the black masks on their faces, wore black cloaks, which almost concealed their figures from head to foot.

They evidently wanted to be disguised, and their disguise was a success, and something very like alarm grew on board the schooner as they came nearer.

A figure stood up in the bows of the craft, and a black-gloved hand was waved at the *Marjorie*.

"Ahoy, there!"

"Ahoy!" shouted back Wharton.

"Lay to!"

"Rats!"

"We're coming on board!"

"You'll get a hot reception if you do!"

"Beware!" The pirate's voice was harsh and stern, as if he were purposely disguising it. "If you resist we shall send every mother's son of you to feed the fishes!"

"Rats!"

"Will you haul down your colours?"

Harry Wharton looked up at the Union Jack that flew from the masthead—the brave old colours streaming out in the breeze.

"No! That flag never comes down to an enemy!"

"Bravo!" shouted Bob Cherry. "Hear, hear!"

"I fancy you're a set of duffers on a jape," went on Harry Wharton, "but if you were Captain Kidd come to life again that flag wouldn't come down. Go and eat coke!"

"Once more—"

"Oh, ring off!"

"Then prepare for trouble! Load!"

There was a rattle of firearms. Most of the *Removites* turned pale. They were real rifles that glinted in the sun, in the hands of the masked, cloaked crew of the mysterious boat.

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Wharton's teeth came together hard.

If the pirates were jokers, they were playing the part with a grim earnestness that looked very like the real thing.

Was it possible that— Pirates in the twentieth century, in the calm waters of an English bay, seemed too absurd to be possible.

Most of the *Removites* had turned white. Bunter had dived into the galley. Captain Stump was staring wide-eyed at the masked figures.

"Present!"

The firearms came up to the level. It looked terribly businesslike. Hazeldene clutched Wharton by the shoulder.

"Don't be a fool, Wharton, give in!"

"But—"

"They are in earnest! Think of the crew!"

"Let them come aboard," muttered Trevor.

"Better to yield now than be sorry afterwards." Wharton gritted his teeth.

"Very well, let them come. But mind—whatever and whoever they are, that flag does not come down!"

Hazeldene waved his hand frantically to the boat.

"Stop! It's all right. You can come aboard!"

The rifles in the pirate boat were lowered.

The boat surged up alongside the schooner and the leader of the mysterious crew clambered aboard, followed by his men. He pointed to the forecabin.

"Get back there!" he said gruffly.

Wharton did not move. Bob Cherry, Nugent, and Mark Linley drew up round him, with Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. But the rest of the juniors went forward slowly, amazedly, hardly knowing whether they were awake or dreaming. The masked boarders watched them go.

Wharton's mind was in a conflict. The masks and the cloaks so effectually concealed the invaders that he could see nothing of them, hardly their eyes. Yet few of them were tall enough to be taken for men—unless, as was possible, they were undersized foreigners.

One of the masked men followed the crew, to close the scuttle upon them when they were in the forecabin. The chief pointed sternly.

"Follow them!"

But as he raised his arm the wind caught his black cloak and blew it up—and an Eton jacket was revealed underneath!

Harry Wharton gave a shout of relief and rage.

"It's a jape! Line up, there!"

And he rushed upon the leader of the boarding party.

"Stand back, or—"

"Rats!"

"Rescue, Remove!" roared Bob Cherry.

But most of the crew were in the forecabin. The door was jammed upon them promptly by a pirate and secured. They raved and thumped from within in vain.

Five juniors were still on deck—Wharton, Cherry, Nugent, Hurree Singh, and Mark Linley. In a moment they were engaged in a wild and whirling fight with a dozen or more foes.

In the Enemy's Hands!

WHARTON fought desperately, and his chums backed him up well, but the odds were too great. They had no chance from the beginning. But they gave a good account of themselves.

In the wild struggle masks and cloaks were torn aside and trampled underfoot, and the familiar garments and faces of the Upper Fourth fellows were revealed.

Temple, Dabney & Co. and nearly a dozen more of the Upper Fourth were the wicked pirates!

They were gasping with laughter now, but they fought hard, all the same, and the odds on their side rendered the result a foregone conclusion.

Harry Wharton was soon down, with Temple and Dabney sitting on him, and Bob Cherry was sat upon by Fry and Harvey. The nabob was captured next, and then Nugent, and Mark Linley was rolled on the deck and tied up with a length of rope.

The fight was over, and the pirates were in possession of the good ship Marjorie. From the prisoners in the forecastle came an endless din of yelling and thumping; but the victors took no notice of it. They rested from their labours, sitting on their prisoners and yelling with laughter.

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Temple. "What a howling jape!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ho, ho, ho!"

"A sixpennyworth of black crepe for the masks and—"

"A dozen black cloaks hired of the costumier in Friardale—"

"A dozen old rifles out of the gym at Greyfriars, that these very asses have used many times for musketry drill—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"And behold the pirates bold!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And the Upper Fourth fellows shrieked again. The Removites did not laugh. The situation was comical enough, but it did not appeal to the heroes of the Remove. They were only thinking of the way they had been fooled, of the yells of laughter that would go up when the story became known at Greyfriars School.

The Removites listened with red faces to the laughter of the Upper Fourth pirates.

There was no doubt that the Remove, for once, had been absolutely done. They had triumphed over the Upper Fourth more than once, but on the present occasion they had to confess themselves "licked to the wide."

The five prisoners on deck, with rope-ends knotted round their limbs, lay helpless prisoners, glaring at one another, and at the pirates, and the latter, every few moments, burst into fresh roars of laughter.

Yet Harry Wharton could not blame himself.

Temple, Dabney & Co. had played their part so well that there had been a dreadful possibility that the masked invaders were really desperadoes in search of booty, and for the sake of the others Harry had given in.

But now he was keenly conscious of the absurdity of the whole affair. The black cloaks and masks cast aside, the grinning faces of the Upper Fourth fellows and their Eton jackets made the scene inexpressibly ridiculous.

The Upper Fourth were gloating; the prisoners on deck glaring, and in the forecastle the rest of the Removites hammered and yelled. But they could not get out.

Dabney and Fry had secured the door fast, and seven Removites were packed in there, unable to come to the aid of their captain.

The Upper Fourth fellows, taking their boat

in tow, were already trimming the sails to run ashore. They intended to take the Remove sailors back to Pegg as prisoners. The fishing village was crowded with fellows that fine afternoon, and Wharton and his crew would be held up to utter ridicule. It would be a blow that the Remove would be a long time in recovering from.

Wharton turned over in his mind desperate projects for escape. But he was bound fast, and there was no chance.

Temple looked down at him with a grin.

"Comfy?" he asked.

"You boulder!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, stop your cackling!" said Bob Cherry. "It's bad enough, without you going off like a cheap alarm clock."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, rather!" gasped Dabney. "Ha, ha, ha!"



Nugent handed down the new pot of paint to Bunter—but he inverted it, and the pot settled on Bunter's head like a hat, the paint rolling down his fat cheeks. "There you are!" exclaimed Nugent. "That's what you've asked for!"

"We're going ashore," grinned Temple. "We're thinking of exhibiting you chaps on the beach as captured lunatics, and charging a penny admission."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the Upper Fourth.

And the Removites could only look at one another with sickly smiles.

"Put the prisoners below," said Temple loftily. "They're in the way here. There's some good grub around. Let's finish it off for them."

"Good idea!"

The bound Removites were dragged down the little companion, and dumped in the cabin. The Upper Fourth fellows remained in possession of the deck.

The schooner was speeding on her new course. Captain Stump was placed at the wheel. The

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wooden-legged seaman had been of no use in the scuffle, as he had been too bewildered to know much of what was going on, and a push had sent him rolling at the start.

Temple, Dabney & Co. did not believe in doing more work than they could help, and the old seaman was put at the wheel, under dire threats of being thrown overboard if he didn't steer straight for Pegg. And the juniors watched him to see that he didn't make any attempt to release Harry Wharton & Co.

In the cabin the Remove prisoners were gloomy enough.

"What a precious lot of giddy asses we shall look!" grunted Bob Cherry. "Fancy being taken in by a set of kids done up in black masks!"

"Oh, it's too rotten!" growled Wharton.

"If we could only get loose!"

"What would be the good?" said Linley. "We couldn't fight a dozen of them. And there's no way of getting the others out of the fo'c'sle."

"I suppose not. It's rotten."

"We shall be at the village in half an hour, and Greyfriars will never finish laughing at us."

"It's rotten!"

"The rottenfulness is terrific!"

And the Removites relapsed into glum silence. From the deck came the sounds of the Upper Fourth feasting on the ample remains of the lunch, and amid the clink of knives and plates rang the bursts of laughter.

In the cabin there was silence; but the silence was broken all at once, and Harry Wharton rolled over, his face flushed, listening intently. A sound had come to his ears—a sound from below in the hold of the schooner.

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Turning the Tables!

WUN LUNG, the Chinese, had not joined in the furious hammering and shouting in the fore-castle. While his companions were exhausting themselves in vain din, the little Chinese was thinking. His quaint little face was screwed up into an expression of intense reflection.

"We can't get out!" exclaimed Hazeldene at last, sitting down on a bunk. "We've been utterly done, and we may as well own up."

"They've changed the course," Trevor remarked.

"Yes; I suppose they're going back to Pegg, to give us a showing up as a set of confounded jackasses!"

"And the grub!" groaned Billy Bunter. "I can hear them wolfing it. There wasn't more than enough left for another meal, and now they're scoffing it."

"Oh, blow the grub!"

"That's all very well, Vaseline, but we shall be hungry."

"If we could only get out we could rush the rotters!" growled Russell. "Can anybody suggest something?"

"We shall have to wait till they open the door," said Dicky Brown. "Then—"

"Faith, and then we shall have all Pegg grinning at us intirely."

"That's so. What are you screwing up your chivvy like a Chinese idol for, Wun Lung? Have you got a wheeze?"

"Me tinkee."

"Well, have you tinkee of anything we can do?"

"Me savvy."

"Oh, rats!" growled Trevor. "We're done!"

"Me savvy."

"Let him speak," said Hazeldene. "He has good ideas sometimes. Go ahead, Wun Lung!"

The Chinese grinned.

"We no gettee out of fo'c'castle," he said. "No openee; but supposee we gettee through into hold?"

And he tapped the bulkhead which divided the fore-castle from the hold. The juniors stared at him.

"My hat!" said Hazeldene. "I never thought of that."

"But the hatch is closed down," said Trevor. "We couldn't get on deck, even if we got through into the hold."

"Lazalette hatch in cabin."

"What on earth does he mean by lazalette?"

"I know!" shouted Hazeldene. "The lazarette! Don't you remember noticing that there's a hatch in the cabin that opens into the hold? If we could get along there, we could get out through the cabin. Those rotters don't know the craft, and they won't have noticed the lazarette hatch."

The juniors looked excited. They only wanted a chance of escaping, and getting at close quarters with the enemy. They were satisfied that they could do the rest.

"But how are we to get through this bulk-head?" growled Trevor. "It won't be easy."

"Oh, I don't know! The inside of this schooner is pretty mouldy everywhere. The hull has been patched up, but the bulkheads are in a pretty rotten state. I think we could force a way through somehow. There's an axe here, and if you fellows will stand out of the way—"

"Look out, ass! Don't brain us!"

"Well, give a fellow room."

"Me tinkee—"
 "That's all right, Wun Lung; you've tinkee enough. Get out of the way!"

"Me tinkee bang on door again, and then the lotters not hear us bleak through bulkhead."
 "Good idea! Hammer again, you chaps, while I use the hatchet."

"Right you are!"
 The hammering in the fore-castle recommenced. In the din thus created, the blows of the hatchet on the bulkhead were not noticed above the rest.

The woodwork was, as Hazeldene said, in a more or less rotten state. A few doughty blows crashed an opening through. A few blows more, and the opening was large enough for the juniors to crawl through into the hold.

"Look out!" muttered Trevor. "It's jolly dark! Ow! I've barked my shin."

"Well, don't bark so jolly loud, or they'll hear you!"

"Look here—"
 "Oh, come on! Bunter, you can stay there and kick up a row, so that they won't suspect. You wouldn't be any use in a fight."

"Oh, really, Vaseline!"
 "Kick up a row! Hammer on the scuttle! Sing! Anything will do so long as it's a fearful row! Come on, you chaps!"

And the Removites and Dicky Brown went on their way. Bunter, not sorry to be left out of the coming scrimmage, hammered away in the fore-castle, and made noise enough to convince the Upper Fourth fellows, if that were needed, that the prisoners were still safe in their quarters.

Meanwhile, the juniors were creeping aft through the darkness, barking their shins, treading on one another's feet, and growling and grunting in chorus.

It was Wun Lung, who seemed to be able to see in the dark, who reached the little cabin hatch first, and crept up the stairs leading to it. He listened there, but not a sound came from the cuddy above.

The little Chinese felt over the hatch, and slowly raised it. He peeped out into the cabin, and a smile glimmered over his face as he saw the Remove prisoners there and no one else. Harry Wharton's eyes met his.

"My hat!" muttered the captain of the Remove.
 "Hallo, hallo, hallo!" murmured Bob Cherry.
 "The Chinese!"

Wun Lung grinned and crept silently out into the cabin. In a couple of minutes he had cut loose the prisoners, and while he was doing so the rest of the Removites came up and joined them. They looked somewhat flushed and dusty, but in good form for a fight, and very eager. Wharton stretched his cramped limbs.

"By Jove, this is good!" he exclaimed in a subdued voice. "Whose idea was it to get at us in that way?"

"Wun Lung's."
 "My hat, you're a little genius, Wun Lung! The Upper Fourth chaps are making for Pegg, and I expect we shall be there in a quarter of an hour. There's going to be rather a change of circumstances on board before we get there, though."

"Yes, rather!"
 "The ratherfulness is terrific!"
 "Come on, and quiet!"

Harry Wharton stole silently up the companion steps. Bob Cherry, Nugent, Hurree Singh, and Hazeldene followed close behind, and then the rest of the Removites, silent and eager.

The companion hatch was open, and the blue

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sky shone above. Wharton put his head out cautiously on deck.

The Upper Fourth were feasting and making merry. It never crossed their minds for a moment that their prisoners could get loose after the careful way in which they had secured them, and they were utterly off their guard. Wharton whispered back to his followers:

"Come on, as fast as you can, and hit your hardest!"

"What-ho!"
 And Harry Wharton sprang out on deck. There was a gasp of amazement from Temple, Dabney & Co. Most of the Upper Fourth jumped to their feet. Wharton rushed right at them.

If the pirates could have closed the companion hatch, they might have bottled up most of the Remove yet. But Harry's idea was to keep them too busy for that, and he succeeded. He rushed into the midst of the Upper Fourth, hitting right and left, and his chums were after him in a few seconds.

Then the rest of the Removites poured out, and the melee became general. A terrific fight raged on the deck of the Marjorie. Desperate couples reeled to and fro in hand-grips, and breathless victors sat gasping on the chests of fallen foes.

The odds were slightly in favour of the Remove, and when Captain Stump secured the wheel and came to their aid, they had decidedly the advantage. The wooden-legged seaman took care not to be upset again, and he accounted for the burliest of the pirates, holding him fast in a loving embrace.

By this time, too, Bunter had crawled through the hold and emerged from the companion. Though he was not much use as a fighting-man, he plumped his weight upon Fry, who had been brought to the deck by Bob Cherry, and held him secure while Bob rushed into the fray again.

And so the tide of battle turned in favour of the Remove. But the fight was a hard one, and black eyes and swollen noses were distributed with great liberality on both sides.

But one by one the Upper Fourth pirates were dragged down and secured, and ropes fastened wrists and ankles.

After a quarter of an hour of terrific scrimmaging, Temple, Dabney & Co. were prisoners, and lay, red and panting, at the feet of their conquerors.

And then the Remove cheered:

"Hurrah! Hip, hip, hurrah!"

The cheering rang over the wide bay and reached the fellows in Pegg, and brought general attention upon the schooner as it glided towards the shore.

"My hat!" gasped Wharton, mopping a trickle of red from his nose. "That was warm while it lasted! But we've done them!"

"Get those masks and things, and shove them on the rotters!" said Nugent. "We'll take 'em in as a crew of captured pirates."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Upper Fourth fellows wriggled and expostulated, but that did not matter to the Remove. The pirates were masked once more, sorely against their will, and the black flag was rolled round Temple in addition.

The crew of the schooner had somewhat recovered their breath by the time the vessel drew into the shore. The Marjorie was brought to anchor smartly enough; the Greyfriars juniors were already falling into the ways of sailormen.

A crowd was on the sands, watching them curiously. Greyfriars fellows of all Forms were there, as well as fisherfolk, young and old. The Removites assumed a gravity suitable to the occasion. The masked pirates were hoisted into their own boat, and the juniors pulled ashore.

Trumper and his Scouts were among the crowd, and they pushed forward, with somewhat warlike looks. But at the sight of the masked and bound prisoners, and the black flag artistically draped round Temple, they stopped and stared.

"What the—?" gasped Trumper.

"Gentlemen, we have captured a crew of pirates and brought them ashore!" said Harry Wharton. "You can hang them, if you like, or make them walk the plank! Shove them ashore!"

And the Upper Fourth pirates were shoved ashore.

They were greeted with roars of laughter. The Removites released their feet, but left their hands tied, so that they were quite helpless till their friends in the crowd began to untie them.

Trumper and his Scouts were yelling with laughter, as well as the rest, and had for the moment forgotten their hostile intentions towards the Removites. The Upper Fourth pirates stumbled away, with faces the colour of beetroots, followed by yells of laughter.

Then, as the Removites were about to push off again, Trumper made a rush for the boat, followed by the Boy Scouts.

"Hold on!" exclaimed Wharton, standing up, boathook in hand. "I say, make it pax for the day, you chaps, and all of you come for a sail in the schooner! We've got plenty of grub aboard, and you'll have a jolly time!"

Trumper paused. The offer was too good to be refused, and it was more attractive than a fight against such odds for the recapture of the deserter, Dicky Brown.

"Right you are!" said Trumper at last. "We'll do it!"

"Good! Tumble in!"

And the Scouts were taken on board. Once more the schooner spread her white sails for a cruise round the bay, the Boy Scouts of Pegg and the Removites of Greyfriars fraternising cordially enough.

The Greyfriars juniors found that they could learn a great deal of practical knowledge from the fisher-boys, and they were keen enough to learn all they could. As for Dicky Brown, he was forgiven by the rest of the patrol, reprisals being hardly possible in the circumstances.

And while the crew of the schooner enjoyed their sail, the Upper Fourth pirates crept disconsolately back to the school to hide their diminished heads. Fellows who had seen them put ashore spread the tale, and all Greyfriars laughed over their adventure.

Harry Wharton and the Remove sailors found them still laughing when, at dusk, they returned to school after one of the most eventful outings of their lives. The Upper Fourth had nothing to say. Temple, Dabney & Co. sang small—very small—and the honours of the day rested with the Greyfriars sailors.

(Look out next week, chums, for another grand story of Harry Wharton & Co.—featuring Mark Linley as "THE BOY WITHOUT A FRIEND!")



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