

Great Stories of the Chums of St. Jim's and Greyfriars!

The GEM

2^p

**THIS WEEK'S STAR
ATTRACTIONS!**

LEVISON'S REVENGE!

By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

**THE BOY WITHOUT
A FRIEND!**

By FRANK RICHARDS.

Also Illustrated Jokes,
Fun Column, Stamp
Article, Pen Pals, Etc.



**KNEES UP,
MR. RATCLIFF!**



HOW'S YOUR LUCK THIS WEEK?

Read what the stars foretell,
by PROFESSOR ZARRO.

LET the stars help you plan out your week! This horoscope, covering the seven days April 6th to April 12th, tells you all you want to know about the way your luck will go this week. To find the section which concerns you, look for the one in which your birthday falls.

January 21st to February 19th.—Interesting experiences will come your way with surprising frequency this week, so that you at least won't find the next seven days dull ones. There is danger of a missed opportunity which might have led to really good luck. Spending your time with mere acquaintances, instead of real friends, would lead to missing this chance.

February 20th to March 21st.—Sunday brings you the solution of a problem which has been worrying you, and, as a result, the latter half of the week is much brighter than the first. The week is pleasant throughout, however. You will notice the influence of strange, inexplicable happenings in all your affairs. Expect a good turn from an elderly relative to-day.

March 22nd to April 20th.—Take advantage of the week's good start, for things quieten down later. Be careful all this week of what you say; there is danger of an unpleasant rumour getting round through careless talking. Friday brings an emergency, but you can cope with it, and even turn it into good luck, if you make yourself rise to the occasion.

April 21st to May 21st.—This is swing-time week for you so far as luck is concerned. Your fortune fluctuates rapidly between good and bad, but the general tendencies are for the good luck to come in important matters and the bad luck in minor affairs. A friend shows up in an unexpected light.

May 22nd to June 22nd.—Don't expect things to happen this week by mere chance. It's a lucky period for you only in that Fate brings a full reward to your own efforts; but there's not much luck of the "sheer jam" kind knocking about for you. In fact, chance happenings take a back seat in your affairs this week, so strike out confidently on your own. Things won't go astray through bad luck; nor will they better themselves by mere good fortune.

June 23rd to July 23rd.—Minor complications in

plans you have made for occupying your spare time. For this reason, don't plan ambitious outings. Quick wits score; so do those people who, by tact, are able to avoid "rows." Money prospects are amazingly good, especially between the 8th and the 11th.

July 24th to August 23rd.—No great excitement this week, but a sense that you're getting a fair deal, and, in fact, that "everything in the garden's lovely." Home affairs play a big part and bring best luck. Outdoors, walking, cycling, and similar outings are better favoured than sports like football, etc.

August 24th to September 23rd.—Best luck comes from matters you had not considered worth while; the big affairs turn out dull. Travel with a friend is indicated. News from someone you have not seen for some time. Ask favours on Thursday.

September 24th to October 23rd.—Don't depart from everyday matters too much this week; it's much better for the present to keep to the things you know, and changes may lead to trouble. Keep with other people, rather than on your own. A visit from relatives makes a change in your plans necessary. Those connected with anything to do with engineering will hear good news concerning this subject towards the week-end.

October 24th to November 22nd.—An invitation to an interesting party or outing of some kind, leading to an enjoyable time. Possibility of an important change, entirely for the better. The one big difficulty of the week turns out lucky, too; in solving it, you see a new opportunity for going ahead.

November 23rd to December 22nd.—A present, not necessarily of money, makes all the difference to how you plan this week. A friend helps you to enjoy the next seven days, though probably the first friend you approach for help lets you down, and it is another who does what you want.

December 23rd to January 20th.—Steady progress which you have been making in many directions comes out this week with a rush. This sudden spurt ahead will probably be connected with someone asking you for your advice. Saturday brings a disappointment, and spoils your full enjoyment for the week-end. Things pick up again, however, on Monday.

BIRTHDAY INDICATIONS.

WEDNESDAY, April 6th.—Steady progress is the keynote of the year, and you may be disappointed that it's not more exciting. Avoid unnecessary changes, however, for they won't bring you good luck. School work, and particularly examinations, are very greatly favoured.

THURSDAY, April 7th.—Money troubles end this year, but you may find yourself starting on a new lot through increasing extravagance. You will enjoy life during the next twelve months, however, and will make many friends.

FRIDAY, April 8th.—Older people may seem tire some this year through being unable to see eye to eye with you in your views. Much more activity in your spare time is indicated. A year of achievement for you in sports.

SATURDAY, April 9th.—A big change is forecasted. You may leave school to go to work, change your school, change your home, change your

job—anything big like that. New and interesting friendships. September is your red-letter month.

SUNDAY, April 10th.—Rather a quiet, uneventful year this, but you will enjoy it, all the same. Reward for work you have done comes late in the year. Several journeys are indicated; they will be both on business and pleasure.

MONDAY, April 11th.—Loss of a friend, who moves away from your home district. You will get out of the rut into which you have been slipping, and new opportunities shown you should be grasped with both hands! Home affairs prosper exceedingly.

TUESDAY, April 12th.—Your handling of a problem—either at your work or elsewhere—will bring you instant recognition from someone above you, and you will get a "leg up" in your affairs. Another lucky break is indicated in July. Definitely a "boom year" all round for you!

MR. RATCLIFF HAS A BUSY DAY—WHEN HE BECOMES THE VICTIM OF—

LEVISON'S REVENGE!



With Mr. Ratcliff hot on his track, the astounded and alarmed Joe Higgins bolted down the passage and out of the New House. "Here they come!" yelled Lowther. "Ha, ha, ha!" Quite a crowd of juniors were interested in the New House master's affairs that afternoon.

CHAPTER 1.

Declined With Thanks!

THE editorial staff of "Tom Merry's Weekly" were very busy in the editorial office—otherwise, Tom Merry's study—when Arthur Augustus D'Arcy came in.

D'Arcy of the Fourth had come to help in the editorial labours. But there was an excited and wrathful expression on his usually serene countenance.

"Somethin' will have to be done about Watty, you fellows," he said, as he came in.

There was no reply.

Tom Merry, Manners, and Lowther were writing away at express speed. Jack Blake was chewing the handle of his pen and meditating deeply. Digby was searching through a dictionary for a rhyme—Dig being engaged upon a poem.

D'Arcy of the Fourth surveyed the busy editors and sub-editors and frowned.

"I made a remark," he announced.

Still no reply.

"Weally, you fellows, a fellow

expects an answah when he makes a wemark!" said Arthur Augustus, in slightly raised tones.

Tom Merry looked up at last.

He pointed with the handle of his pen to a sheet of cardboard stuck on the mantelpiece, upon which was daubed, in large letters:

"SILENCE!"

"Wats!" said Arthur Augustus emphatically. "I wepeat that somethin' will have to be done about old Watty."

"Sit down and turn out your article!" said Tom Merry severely. "Never mind old Ratty now. This copy has got to be written. The fellows have been calling our 'Weekly' 'Tom Merry's Annual' lately. We've got to get this number out, or burst a boiler. And make your article half its usual length. The paper is cut down this week."

"Wubbish!"

"The cost of paper has gone up, you know," explained the chief editor. "We're making it four pages short. Everything in

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By

MARTIN CLIFFORD.

It pays to advertise—and Ernest Levison proves the truth of this in getting his revenge on a sour-tempered Housemaster!

the paper is cut down except the leading article. I'm doing that now."

"Weally, Tom Mewwy, it would be more judicious to cut down the least attractive featurah of the papah!"

"Yes, I've done that—your fashion article."

"I wefuse to have my article cut down!"

"Then I'll cut it down for you."

"You uttah ass—"

"Silence!" roared Mauners.

"Howevah, I was makin' a wemark about old Watty—"

"Well, don't!"

"Old Watty is on the warpath again. He has been pullin' Levison's yah."

"I dare say Levison asked for it."

"Wats! It is a stain on the honah of the School House for a School House chap's yah to be pulled by the New House mastah. Levison is wathah a wottah, but he is a School House chap, and we're not goin' to have Watty pullin' School House yahs."

"Blow Levison's ears!" howled Blake. "Dry up."

"I wefuse to dwy up, Blake! I wegard this as a question affectin' the honah of the House. Why, Watty may start pullin' my yah next!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus indignantly.

"He's welcome to," said Monty Lowther; "and if he'd gag you at the same time, we'd pass a vote of thanks."

"Weally, Lowthah—"

The door opened again, and Levison of the Fourth came in. The juniors looked at him. Levison was scowling, and his right ear was very red. Mr. Ratcliff's finger and thumb had closed on it like a pair of pincers, and Levison had been hurt.

Tom Merry waved his hand.

"Gussy told us about it, Levison. Don't interrupt the work. Buzz off!"

"Look here—" began Levison angrily.

"Silence in court!"

"I've brought you a contribution."

"Oh! Well, you can lay it on the table," said the chief editor. "Outside contributions are rather cut down in this number, owing to the increased cost of paper. But I'll look at it."

"It's about Ratty," said Levison. "The beast has been pulling my ear—for nothing, of course."

"Oh, of course!" grinned Blake.

"Well, I did nothing. I was simply talking to Mellish about rats, when Ratty happened to pass. He took it as a reference to himself—"

"And so it was—"

"Well, suppose it was! He had no right to go for me. He's not the only rat at St. Jim's, I suppose?"

"Ha, ha, ha! No."

"Well, I can't pull his ear," said Levison. "But I think we ought to slate the cad in the 'Weekly.' We can get at him that way."

"Ahem! That depends. We don't want the paper suppressed for slating the masters," said Tom Merry, with a shake of the head. "However, I'll look at it."

Tom Merry picked up Levison's contribution, and read it out. It was in the form of a limerick, and it ran:

"There's a rotter whose temper is catty,
Whose appearance is never quite natty.

His face makes you think

He's the real missing link;

And a rat couldn't be quite so ratty."

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"You see, there's nothing he can take hold of in that," said Levison. "He's bound to see it, and know that it's meant for him, but he can't prove it, as there's no name mentioned."

"He will take it for granted, I imagine," said Tom. "We don't want to be called up before the Head for insulting a Housemaster. Can't be did, Levison."

"But he couldn't prove—"

"The Head would ask us out straight if it was meant for Ratty."

"Well, you could say it wasn't!"

Tom Merry's lip curled.

"Perhaps we could, if we were liars," he said.

"But we're not. Publishing a thing and telling lies about it afterwards isn't quite the style of this 'Weekly.' Declined with thanks!"

Levison picked up his contribution, with a bitter smile.

"So you're afraid!" he sneered.

Tom rose to his feet.

"Which way do you prefer to leave this office?" he asked. "On your head or on your neck?"

"You're funky of having Ratty down on you!"

"Oh, chuck him out!" exclaimed Lowther.

Levison backed hastily out of the study as the captain of the Shell made a movement towards him.

"The limerick's going in all the same," he said between his teeth. "You'll see."

And he strode away down the passage.

Tom Merry slammed the door and returned to his editorial duties.

"Cheeky rotter!" growled Blake.

"It's enough to get us all licked and the paper suppressed, to put in rot like that about a master," said Tom. "Levison wouldn't mind if 'Tom Merry's Weekly' got it in the neck. But we should mind."

"Besides, it is wathah disrespectful," remarked Arthur Augustus. "Watty is a vewy objectionable chawactah, but there is such a thing as good form. I quite approve of your decision."

"After which nothing remains to be said," remarked Lowther. "And thank goodness for that! Dry up and let's get on!"

"Weally, Lowthah—"

"Silence!" shouted all the editors together.

And Arthur Augustus sniffed and sat down to his literary labours.

CHAPTER 2.

A Little Mistake!

"WELL, what's the game?" asked Crooke. There was a meeting in Levison's study.

Crooke and Racke of the Shell, Levison and Mellish of the Fourth, and Piggott of the Third were there.

The door was locked, and Levison had produced a packet of cigarettes. But it was not merely for a forbidden smoke that the black sheep of the School House had foregathered in Levison's study.

It was understood that there was something "on"—something that was up against Tom Merry & Co. All Levison's friends were quite ready to take a hand in anything against the Terrible Three so long as there was no great risk involved.

"I want you chaps to help me," explained Levison. "I suppose you know they're getting out a new number of the 'Weekly.'"

Gerald Crooke yawned portentously. "What does that rot matter to us?" he asked. "I've got something to go in the paper, and Tom Merry won't put it in. It's about Ratty, and he's afraid of being called over the coals," said Levison. "My idea is to shove it in, all the same, and I want you fellows to help."

"Blessed if I see how! Besides, you'll get into a row," said Mellish. "I know Ratty always gets hold of a number of the 'Weekly' and looks at it. He always thinks somebody's getting at him. Of course, fellows do get at him."

"That's what I want," said Levison. "If my limerick comes out in the 'Weekly,' it will be supposed to be their work, not mine. I can prove that Tom Merry refused to put in anything of mine."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"But you can't shove it in without their knowing," remarked Piggott.

"That's my idea, though. They're finishing the copy now, and one of them is going down to Rylcombe with it to hand it to old Tiper, at the 'Rylcombe Gazette' office, before it closes. My idea is to watch for the chap who goes, and take the copy away from him and put in my limerick."

"Well, if there's only one of them, I suppose we could do that easily enough," said Crooke. "But they'd know, and they'd alter it afterwards."

Levison shook his head.

"Not at all! We collar the rotter, whoever he is, and rag him. He will be too busy to think about his parcel. While you fellows are bumping him, I can open the parcel and make the alteration and fasten it up again. After we've done with him, he finds the parcel in the road just as he dropped it. Ten to one he won't guess it's been opened and altered."

"Not a bad idea," assented Crooke. "But if we rag one of them, there'll be a ragging for us to follow."

"I suppose it's worth the risk, isn't it? Ratty will raise Cain about that limerick, and the whole gang of them will be caned and the paper suppressed."

"Of course, that's all right. But—"

"Where are you going, Piggott?" asked Levison.

"Got an appointment with a chap in the Third," said Piggott; and he unlocked the door and quitted the study.

Piggott evidently did not want a ragging.

Levison scowled.

"I suppose you fellows are not afraid?" he sneered. "It's a chance in a thousand of getting even with those cads."

Crooke and Mellish hesitated. But Racke nodded at once.

"I'm your man!" he said. "Count me in!"

"Oh, all right!" said Crooke; and Mellish assented, too.

"Then we'd better be on the look-out for the chap who goes with the copy," said Levison. "We'll hang about the door till he goes out."

The cigarettes having been finished, Levison & Co. left the study and took up their stand outside the School House to watch for the "copy" and its bearer. About a quarter of an hour later Arthur Augustus D'Arcy came out.

The swell of St. Jim's had a little parcel under his arm, and Levison & Co. exchanged glances as they noted it.

"That's it!" said Levison. He approached

Arthur Augustus with a careless air. "Going out, D'Arcy?"

"Yaas, deah boy."

"Down to Rylcombe, I suppose?"

"Weally, Levison, I do not see how you know I am goin' to Wylcombe, but, as a mattah of fact, I am goin' there."

Arthur Augustus walked away to the bike-shed, and Levison, grinning, rejoined his comrades.

"It's all right," he said. "He's going down to Rylcombe on his bike. We've lots of time to get ahead of him. Come on!"

The four juniors hurried out of the gates. They ran down the lane for a couple of hundred yards, out of sight of the gates, and halted there. There they waited for the cyclist.

A few minutes later Arthur Augustus came in sight, riding at a leisurely pace, with his bundle tied on the handlebars of his machine.

Racke held up his hand.

"Stop!"

"Bai Jove!" ejaculated Arthur Augustus.

He slowed down. The four juniors were standing directly in his way, so he had to stop. He jumped off the machine.

"What's the mattah?" he asked.

"We've come out specially to see you!" grinned Levison. "Collar him!"

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Starting Next Week!

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"Bai Jove! Hands off, you wottahs!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus indignantly.

He had to let go the bike to put up his hands in defence. The bicycle went clanging in the road, and Arthur Augustus stood up manfully against the rush of the four ragers.

Levison yelled as he went backwards from a drive on the chest, and Mellish sat down suddenly with a feeling as if his nose had been driven through the back of his head.

Arthur Augustus, with all his elegant ways, was quite a fighting-man when his noble blood was up. But Crooke and Racke were upon him and dragged him down, and Levison and Mellish piled in again immediately. The odds were too great.

Arthur Augustus sprawled in the dust, with the four ragers sprawling over him.

"Gwoogh!" gasped Arthur Augustus. "Fair play, you wottahs! I shall give you a feahful thwashia' for this! Gwoogh! Gewwoff my neck, Mellish! Ow-wow!"

"Roll him in the dust!" grinned Levison.

"Gwoogh-wow! Yawwooh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Arthur Augustus resisted manfully, but Crooke, Racke, and Mellish rolled him over and over,

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and Gussy's elegant "clobber" collected huge quantities of dust.

Meanwhile, Levison had jerked the bundle off the handlebars of the bike.

Arthur Augustus, naturally, had no eyes for him; he was too busily engaged with the ragers. Levison slipped behind the hedge with the bundle, untied it hastily, and opened it.

Then he jumped.

It was not the manuscript of the "Weekly" that met his eyes.

A carefully folded pair of trousers came to light as he opened the paper wrapping.

Levison stared at the trousers blankly.

"Sold!" he ejaculated.

He ran back into the road furiously.

Arthur Augustus, dusty from head to foot, was still struggling with the ragers.

"You uttah wottahs!" he shouted. "You are wuinin' my clobber! Gwoogh! Cwooke, you wottah! Wacke, you wascall! Gwoogh!"

"Let the silly fool alone!" growled Levison. "This isn't the copy!"

"What?"

The ragers released the swell of St. Jim's.

Arthur Augustus sat up, gasping for breath.

"Oh, you awful wottahs! Gwoogh!"

"Where's the copy of the 'Weekly,' hang you?" shouted Levison.

"Eh?"

Arthur Augustus blinked at Levison.

"You uttah ass! The 'Weekly' isn't finished yet. So you were aftah the copy, you wottah?"

"You silly ass, Levison!" growled Crooke. "You've given the game away now! And all for a pair of trousers! You ass!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" cackled Mellish.

"You uttah ass, Levison! I am takin' those twousahs to the tailah to be pweessed. I am not takin' the copy of the 'Weekly.' You uttah duffah!"

Levison scowled savagely.

Arthur Augustus scrambled to his feet.

The disappointed ragers turned away. Arthur Augustus began to dust himself down.

"I shall see you wottahs again when I come in!" he called after Levison & Co. "You can make up your minds to have a feahful thwashin' all wound!"

Which was a very pleasant prospect for Levison & Co. As they came in at the school gates they met the Terrible Three. Tom Merry had a packet in his hand, and it was easy to guess that it contained the copy of the "Weekly."

The Shell fellows started down the road, and Levison looked quickly at his companions.

"Come on!" he muttered. "We shall be four to three—"

"Thank you for nothing!" said Crooke. "I'm not tackling three of them! Go and eat coke!"

And Levison scowled and gave it up.

The "Weekly" arrived safely at the office of the "Rylcombe Gazette," and was duly delivered into the hands of Mr. Tipper. But Levison was not beaten yet.

CHAPTER 3.

D'Arcy on the Warpath!

"I HAVE been wagged!" Arthur Augustus D'Arcy made that startling announcement in Study No. 6.

Blake, Herries, and Digby were at tea when the swell of St. Jim's returned from Rylcombe.

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Arthur Augustus was late for tea, but he was not thinking of that. He had been ragged, and that was a matter that overshadowed everything else.

Blake & Co., however, did not seem to be greatly impressed. They went on with their tea untrilled.

"Do you fellows hear me?" asked Arthur Augustus.

"Yes; your tea's ready."

"I have been wagged! Four feahful wottahs collahed me in the lane and wagged me. I am goin' to thwash them all wound. I want you fellows to come and see fair play. Look at my clobber!"

"Untidy!" said Blake. "Really, D'Arcy, we can't have you going about in this dusty state! It reflects on the study."

"I wepeat that I have been wagged!" shrieked Arthur Augustus excitedly.

"That's no excuse for slovenliness. Towser's tail is wagged often enough, but it doesn't get dusty!" said Herries.

"I wefuse to be misappwehended in this wiculous way. I have been wagged, and I am goin' to thwash the wottahs. If you wottahs will not back me up, I will go and ask Julian and Kewwuish to see me thwough!"

"Oh, we'll see you through!" said Blake resignedly. "Who are the wicked rebels who have dared to lay a sacrilegious hand on the only Adolphus?"

"Levison, Mellish, Wacke, and Cwooke. They were aftah the 'Weekly,' and they collahed me. I was takin' my twousahs to the tailah's to be pweessed, and the duffahs thought it was the 'Weekly.' They wagged me!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"It's not a laughin' mattah! My clothes have been almost wuined. I am goin' to thwash them all wound! Come and back me up!"

"Oh, all right! Won't you have your tea first?"

"Imposs! This mattah cannot be allowed to west!"

Arthur Augustus led the way from Study No. 6, and Blake & Co. followed him, grinning.

Arthur Augustus was on the warpath, and at such moments his chums found him very entertaining.

Levison's study was visited first.

Lumley-Lumley and Trimble were present, but there was no sign of Levison or Mellish.

"Where are those wottahs, Lumley-Lumley?" asked Arthur Augustus, breathing hard. "I am lookin' for Levison and Mellish to thwash them!"

"Gone over to the New House, I think," said Lumley-Lumley. "Crooke and Racke came in for them after tea. They're visiting Clampe of the Shell. I think there's a smoking party on in Clampe's study."

"The uttah wottahs! Come on, deah boys!"

Arthur Augustus marched off again, and headed for the stairs.

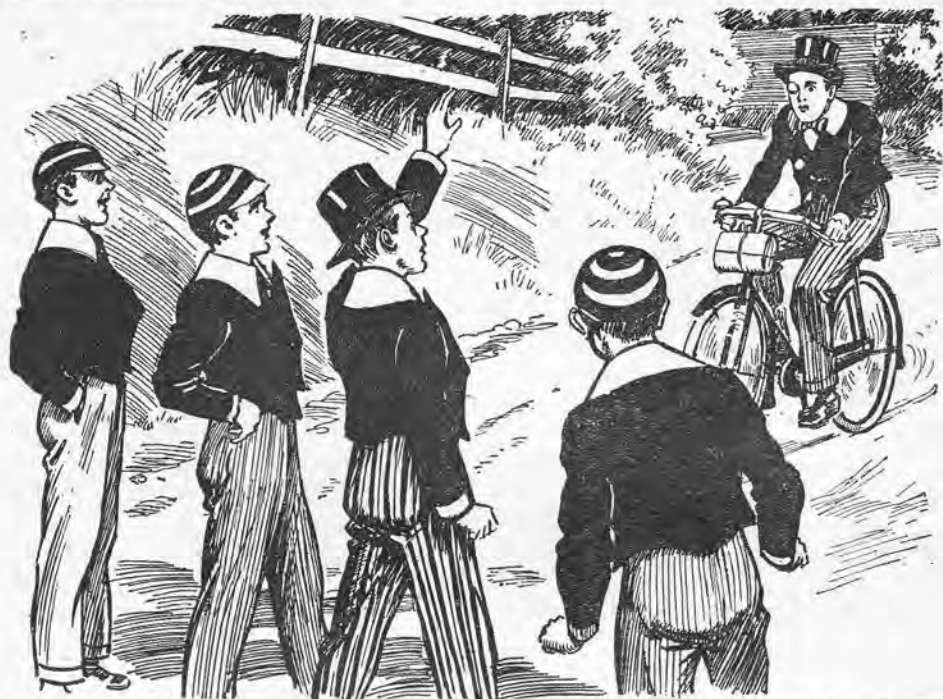
"Hold on!" said Digby. "We'd better not go over rowing in the New House. There may be trouble with Ratty."

"Wats!"

"Wait till the giddy goats come home, Gussy!" advised Herries.

"I wefuse to do anythin' of the sort! I'm goin' oveh to the New House. Those wottahs are keepin' out of the way on purpose! Wats!"

Arthur Augustus strode out into the quadrangle, and Blake & Co. followed. They could not refuse to back up their chum, even when he took the bit



Racke held up his hand as Arthur Augustus approached on his bicycle. "Stop!" The swell of St. Jim's slowed down, the four juniors standing directly in his way. "Bai Jove!" he ejaculated. "What's the mattah?"

between his teeth in this manner. The Terrible Three met them in the quad. They had just returned from Rylcombe.

"Hallo! What's the row?" asked Monty Lowther. "Wherefore this lofty frown upon the brow of the great Gussy?"

"Pway don't wot, Lowthah! I have been wagged! The wottahs are hidin' in the New House, and I'm goin' to wout them out!"

"Come along and help, you fellows!" said Blake. "I suppose it will end in a House row, and the more the merrier."

"Right-ho!"

Tom Merry, Manners, and Lowther joined the procession to the New House.

They arrived there and found Figgins & Co. chatting in the doorway.

Figgins, Kerr, and Wynn looked suspiciously at the School House party.

"Pax!" said Tom Merry. "No House rows this time."

"What do you want, then?"

"Gussy has been wagged," said Monty Lowther gravely. "The wotten waggars have taken wefuge in this building, and Gussy is going to wout them out."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Figgins & Co. kindly stood aside, and allowed the School House party to march in.

Tom Merry & Co. ascended the stairs to the junior quarters. They arrived at Clampe's study. Clampe of the Shell was a sportive youth, on very good terms with the black sheep of the School House. There was a buzz of voices in the study.

Tom Merry rapped on the door.

"Hallo! Who's there?" called out Clampe's voice.

"Gustavus the Great!" replied Monty Lowther. "He is looking for some wottahs who have wagged him!"

"Weally, Lowthah—"

"You can cut off!" called out Clampe.

Tom Merry turned the handle, but the door did not open. It was locked on the inside. There was a chuckle from within.

"Open this door!" shouted Arthur Augustus.

"Rats!"

"If you wefuse to open the door, Clampe, I shall have no wresource but to bwreak the lock!"

"Bow-wow!"

"Pway get a hammah or somethin', you fellows!"

"Oh, draw it mild!" said Blake. "You can't break open New House studies, you know. We shall have a prefect up here if you kick up a row."

"Blow the pwpfects!"

"But you can't blow prefects, you know—prefects are not to be blown! Better leave it over."

"I wefuse to leave it ovah!"

Arthur Augustus looked up and down the passage with a gleaming eye in search of an implement for housebreaking. The juniors watched him, grinning.

"Can you lend me a hammah, Figgins—"

"Not this evening," grinned Figgins.

"All wight, I shall find somethin'!"

Arthur Augustus stepped into the next study. He reappeared with a chair in his hands.

Crash!

The chair smote the door with a terrific concussion.

"My hat!" ejaculated Figgins. "You'll have Ratty up here at this rate."

"Blow Watty!"

Crash, crash, crash!

CHAPTER 4.

The Conquering Hero!

CLAMPE of the Shell jumped up.

He was alarmed. That crashing on the door was certain to attract attention, and Clampe did not want a master or a prefect to look in and find the study reeking with smoke.

"Stop that!" shouted Clampe. "I'll open the door, you idiot!"

"Betrah buck up, then!"

Clampe unlocked the door and opened it.

Arthur Augustus set down the chair, and strode into the study, followed by the School House party.

Levison & Co. drew together.

"Now, you wottahs, I have wun you down!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus. "Blake, will you hold my jacket? Pway mind my eyeglass, Dig! Now, which of you wottahs is goin' to be thwashed first?"

"Don't all speak at once!" grined Monty Lowther.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Levison & Co. did not seem in a hurry to speak at all.



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The Convoy Goes Through!

The bridge was blazing furiously. Steve Chivers never hesitated. Over he roared, and after him came the rest of the truck fleet, racing towards the giant Moose River Dam—fighting the last minutes in a four-year battle against time!

"As you do not appeah eagah to begin, I will take you in alphabeticah ordah," said Arthur Augustus. "You come first, Cwooke!"

"Hands off, you fool!"

"I wufese to be called a fool, Cwooke! Put up your paws!"

"Keep off! Yow-ow-ow-woop!" roared Crooke, as Arthur Augustus opened the attack.

Crooke put his hands up. He was older and bigger than D'Arcy, but he did not make much of a show in the wild and whirling scrap that ensued. The indignant Gussy knocked him right and left, and Crooke went down at last, and lay, gasping, on his back.

"Pway get up, Cwooke!" said Arthur Augustus. "I have not finished yet."

"Wow-wow!" moaned Crooke. "I'm done!"

"Oh, vewy well! I wegahd you as a slackin' wottah, Cwooke! You are not weally half-licked yet. Howevah, you can w'iggle away if you like. Your turn next, Levison!"

"Oh, don't be a silly idiot!" said Levison.

"We shall have Ratty up here if this row goes on."

"I have been wagged, Levison, and I wufese to considah Watty in the mattah at all! Pway come on!"

"Go it, Gussy!" sang out Redfern.

Quite a crowd of New House juniors had now gathered round the doorway, looking on in great delight.

Arthur Augustus "went it." Levison had to fight, and he did his best. He was a much tougher opponent than Crooke. Had he been in proper condition he would probably have been the last on Gussy's list. But the cad of the Fourth was hopelessly out of condition, and in a few minutes he had bellows to mend. He was driven round the table, and a right-hander knocked him into the corner of the study at last, and he stayed there.

Arthur Augustus was breathing very hard now.

"Is that suffish, Levison?" he inquired politely.

"Yes, hang you!" growled Levison.

"Vewy well. Your turn next, Mellish!"

"I—I say, it was only a joke, you know," said Mellish. "I'm willing to apologise."

"I shall be vewy pleased to accept your apology, Mellish, aftah I have thwashed you. I have been wagged. Pway put up your hands! I do not wish to huwvy you, Mellish; but if you do not put up your hands, I shall hit you on the nose!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Go it, Gussy! Mop 'em up!"

The unfortunate Mellish put up his hands reluctantly. Mellish did not last long. The second punch felled him to the floor, and he declined to rise.

"You are not done yet, Mellish!"

"Ow!" growled Mellish. "I give you best!"

"Pway cwawl out of the way, you funky wottah! Wacke, it is your turn."

"I'm ready for you!" growled Racke of the Shell.

"Pway come on!"

Racke came on more readily than the others. The two were soon going it hammer and tongs, cheered on by the delighted crowd in the passage. Racke put up a good fight, and D'Arcy found his hands full. He was feeling the effects of his previous exertions, and they told on him.

Blake & Co. looked a little anxious. Arthur Augustus was giving ground now. It would be

too humiliating for Gussy to be licked by a cad like Racke.

"Back up, Gussy!"

"Go for his nose, old man!"

"Put your beef into it!"

"Leave Racke to me, Gussy!" said Herries.

"Wats! I am goin' to thwash him!" gasped Arthur Augustus.

The two combatants closed in strife, and Gussy's head went into chancery.

There were muffled roars from D'Arcy as Racke punched away savagely. But he wrenched himself loose, and delivered an upper-cut that fairly lifted Racke off his feet.

Racke of the Shell crashed down on the floor with a gasping yell.

Arthur Augustus leaned heavily on the table, and panted for breath.

"Bravo, Gussy!"

"Oh, what a nose!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Arthur Augustus mopped his nose. It was streaming crimson.

"Wacke, you wottah, gewwup!"

Racke gasped.

"I'm done! Ow-wow-wow!" Racke clasped his chin and moaned. "Hang you! Yow-ow! I'm done! Yow!"

"Behold the conquering hero!" grinned Monty Lowther. "Don't leave off now, Gussy, just when you're in the vein. Thrash some more while you're about it. Here's Clampe waiting for his turn."

"I'm not!" growled Clampe.

There was a sudden call along the passage.

"Cave!"

The warning was followed by a scampering of feet. The crowd in the passage melted away as if by magic.

Tom Merry & Co., unfortunately, could not melt away. The School House fellows had no escape.

Mr. Ratcliff, the Housemaster of the New House, came striding along the passage with a thunderous brow.

"Now, look out for squalls!" murmured Manners.

The New House master halted in the doorway of the study.

He looked at the School House party, and he looked at the overturned chairs and the trampled carpet. He looked at D'Arcy's flushed and battered countenance, and at the four fellows who were groaning over their injuries. Fortunately for Clampe, the smoke had cleared off, and the cigarettes were out of sight.

"What does this mean?" thundered Mr. Ratcliff.

There was no reply. It was quite clear what it meant, for that matter, and the question was superfluous.

"Clampe, this is your study. Are you responsible for the disgraceful uproar I have heard?"

"N-no, sir!" gasped Clampe. "I couldn't prevent it, sir."

"Did you ask these boys from the other House to enter here, and to make this disturbance, Clampe?"

"Certainly not, sir! They forced their way in!"

Mr. Ratcliff's eyes glittered. He had a heavy down on Tom Merry & Co., and nothing pleased him more than to make complaints to Mr. Railton on the subject of the School House fellows. This was a great chance for Mr. Ratcliff.

"Merry, I suppose you were the leader in this—"

"Not at all, Mr. Watoliff," said Arthur Augustus. "I was the leadah, sir!"

"Then you are responsible for this disgraceful disturbance, D'Arcy?"

"I do not wegard it as disgwaceful, sir. I came here to thwash some wottahs for waggin' me."

"Clampe, kindly tell me exactly what has happened."

Clampe was quite ready to do so.

"Levison, Mellish, Crooke, and Racke came over to tea with me, sir," he said. "D'Arcy and his friends came after them. That is all I know, sir."

"Who began the disturbance?"

"D'Arcy, sir, and his friends backed him up. Otherwise, I should have turned him out of the study. My friends did not want to fight."

"Is that correct, D'Arcy?"

"Yaas, sir."

"Very good. You School House boys will return to your own House at once. I shall lay



"Traffic light—what's that?"

Half-a-crown has been awarded to M. Band, 613, 4th Avenue, South Kenora, Ontario, Canada.

the matter before your Housemaster. You may go!"

"Weally, Mr. Watcliff—"

"Go!" thundered Mr. Ratcliff.

And Tom Merry & Co. went.

CHAPTER 5.

Called Over the Coals!

"FATHEAD!"

"Ass!"

"Duffer!"

"Jabberwock!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy polished his eyeglass, jammed it into his eye, and surveyed his friends calmly, as they delivered their candid opinions of him.

Tom Merry & Co. were waiting in Study No. 6 for the inevitable summons to Mr. Railton's study.

Mr. Ratcliff had come over to the School House almost on their heels, and he was now in the Housemaster's study. The storm was brewing.

"Why didn't we tie the duffer up in the first place?" said Jack Blake, addressing space. "We could have done that!"

"Weally, Blake—"

"Now Ratty's got us by the short hairs," said Blake. "It's a chance of a lifetime for Ratty. A gang of us going over to his House and making a thundering row there—that's how he'll put it to Railton. And we can't deny it."

"Well, we're in for it!" said Tom Merry. "We've put ourselves in the wrong this time, and

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Ratty won't give us a chance. Hallo, here comes Kildare!"

Kildare of the Sixth looked into the study.

"You're wanted in Mr. Railton's study—the lot of you!"

Tom Merry & Co. proceeded to the House-master's study, not at all in cheerful spirits. Mr. Railton was looking grim. Mr. Ratcliff was with him, still thunderous.

Levison & Co. were not in the study. Evidently Mr. Ratcliff's complaint did not include them.

"Mr. Ratcliff has made a very serious complaint to me!" said Mr. Railton sternly. "It appears that you visited a study in the New House this evening, and deliberately made a disturbance there. Have you anything to say?"

"Yaas, wathah, sir! The fact is, I went ovah to the New House to thwash some wottahs—"

"What!"

"To thwash some wottahs, sir!" said Arthur Augustus firmly. "My friends went with me to see fair play, and they did not take part in the wov."

"I understood you to say, Mr. Ratcliff, that the whole party were concerned in this disturbance."

"Certainly!" snapped Mr. Ratcliff. "I found the study almost a wreck. They had forced their way in to attack some School House boys who appeared to have taken refuge from their ruffianism!"

"That isn't correct, sir," said Tom Merry, his eyes glinting. "We went over to see fair play, as D'Arcy says."

"You did not join in the disturbance?"

"No, sir! We should have joined in if D'Arcy hadn't got fair play, though. That's what we went for."

"Who was responsible for the forcing of the door?"

"I was, Mr. Wailton."

"Did your friends help you?"

"No, sir."

"You will see, Mr. Ratcliff, that D'Arcy alone was responsible."

"I am sure, Mr. Railton, that that does not mean that these young ruffians are to be unpunished!" rapped out Mr. Ratcliff. "If such is your decision, I shall have no choice but to take the matter before the Head!"

Mr. Railton's eyes gleamed for a moment, but his voice was quite calm as he replied:

"Not at all! As they aided and abetted D'Arcy in making a disturbance in the New House by their presence and support, I shall punish them. So far as they are concerned, however, the matter is not serious. D'Arcy, I shall cane you severely."

"Bai Jove!"

"The rest will take two hundred lines each."

"Yes, sir!" said Tom Merry.

"I object to this!" snapped Mr. Ratcliff. "I consider that every member of the party should be caned very severely—most severely, sir."

"I am sorry I cannot meet your views, Mr. Ratcliff," said the School House master, unmoved. "All but D'Arcy will go!"

Tom Merry & Co. quitted the study. Mr. Railton rose and took up the cane.

"Hold out your hand, D'Arcy."

"Yaas, sir."

Swish, swish, swish, swish!

"Gwoogh! Gwoogh!" mumbled D'Arcy, as he squeezed his hands. "Oh deah!"

"You may go, D'Arcy!"

"Thank you, sir!"

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"And that is all the punishment you think proper to inflict, Mr. Railton?" said Mr. Ratcliff furiously.

"I have inflicted the punishment that seems to me just," said Mr. Railton coldly. "The matter is ended now."

"Then I shall refer it to Dr. Holmes."

"You may please yourself about that, of course!"

Mr. Ratcliff whisked out of the study with rustling gown.

Arthur Augustus was squeezing his hands in the passage. The New House master gave him a dark look as he passed. But he did not go to the Head's study. He was well aware that Dr. Holmes would uphold the School House master in his own House, and it was useless to complain. The threat was an idle one.

Mr. Ratcliff whisked back to his own House and found some solace in boxing Figgins' ear as he went in. He whisked on, leaving George Figgins staring after him in bewilderment and wrath.

Arthur Augustus was still squeezing his hands when he returned to Study No. 6.

"Had it hot?" growled Blake.

"Yow-ow! Yaas! Wow! Wow!"

"Serve you jolly well right!" said Blake unsympathetically. "If Railton hadn't licked you, we'd jolly well bump you, you duffer!"

"Weally, Blake—"

"As it is, you can do the lines!" said Digby.

"That'll be a total of twelve hundred for you, and I hope you'll enjoy them!"

"Weally, Dig—"

"Br-r-r-r!"

And Study No. 6 settled down to prep, Arthur Augustus pausing every now and then to rub his hands.

CHAPTER 6.

Levison's Luck is Out!

"NOT good enough!" said Percy Mellish, with emphasis.

"There's no risk—"

"There's a jolly lot of risk, you fathead! Ask next door," said Mellish. "Nothing doing, so far as I'm concerned."

Levison scowled angrily.

The black sheep of the Fourth had a new scheme in his fertile brain, but his cronies were fed-up with Levison's schemes.

It was a couple of days after the row in the New House. "Tom Merry's Weekly" had not been delivered yet, but it was expected the following day. The number being so exceedingly late, the editors had dispensed with proofs.

Levison was quite aware that proofs of the "Weekly" were not to be sent on this occasion, and that gave him the chance of altering the copy, undiscovered, if he could get at it. And he had thought of a way of doing so.

Levison's new scheme for getting the limerick into the "Weekly" seemed to him an excellent one, but his comrades did not view the matter in the same light. Crooke was alarmed at the mere suggestion, Racke told him to go and eat coke, and Piggott politely informed him that he would see him hanged first. He tried Mellish last, and he found Mellish as hard to convince as the others.

"It's as safe as houses," said Levison. "I'm going to take all the risk, if there is any. I've scouted round Tiper's place. It's perfectly easy

LAUGH THESE OFF!

—with Monty
Lowther.



Hallo, Everybody!

Buck Finn asks if it is possible to make a tour of London's underworld. Certainly. Tickets may be obtained at any Tube station.

Funny how your own radio set sends you to sleep, whilst the set next door keeps you awake.

News: A film is to be made on the life of Alexander Graham Bell, the inventor of the telephone. That should ring the bell.

Story: "May I help you, Taggles?" asked Wally D'Arcy politely, seeing Taggles, the porter, straining with a packing case. "What can you do?" snorted Taggles. "Oh, I'll grunt while you lift!" suggested Wally impishly.

I hear an American music-hall performer swallows every variety of metal wire. His favourite, of course, is mixed grille.

In a remote part of China a tame bear has been given a royal title. And probably a twenty-one bun salute!

A commercial traveller fined for speeding

says he finds stepping on the gas more expensive than gassing on the step.

At the House Sports, Figgins, in a red shirt, won the hundred yards. Naturally, a scarlet runner is always full of beans.

"There is much to be said about Mr. Ratcliff," says Fatty Wynn. Yes, but I dare not put it in print.

I hear a bagpipe solo was broadcast recently. Quite a lot of people took their sets to pieces in an endeavour to locate the trouble.

"Goldfish Worth £100 On Exhibition." Must be solid right through.

I hear the World's Fattest Woman, shown at the Wayland Fair, was a fake. A padded "sell"!

Hollywood Story: "This is some snappy dialogue you've written," said the film producer to the dialogue writer. "Yes," agreed the latter, "I've got a genius for doing that sort of thing." "Oh, I see!" exclaimed the producer. "I thought you couldn't have written it yourself!"

Try this: Man arriving in New York asked a boy to direct him to the National Bank. Boy asked for fifty cents. Visitor agreed. Boy escorted him a few doors along the street to the bank. "That wasn't much to ask fifty cents for, was it?" asked the visitor. "Aw, shucks!" replied the lad. "You must remember that bank directors in New York get big salaries!"

Hi-de-ho! It's all right. I come of a musical family. I have a drum in my car.

Signing off till next Wed., chaps!

to get into the printing-rooms from the garden. It's quite detached from the part of the house where they live."

"Bow-wow!" said Mellish.

"I spotted them this afternoon at work there," said Levison. "Old Tiper has only a boy to help him, and neither of them would be there at night. We could get in at a window as easy as falling off a form, and alter the type as much as we liked. It's certain to be set up to-day. Tiper promised it for to-morrow, only his new stock of paper hasn't come in yet. I heard Blake say so!"

"You can chance it if you like!" grinned Mellish. "Leave me out!"

"It's a jolly good idea! Some of the 'Weekly' will be set up, at least, and I know how to set type. I can put the limerick in, taking something else out, and old Tiper will never notice it when he runs the sheets off on the printing machine. They're not having any proofs sent."

"And suppose you get nailed and arrested as a burglar?" said Mellish.

"That's all rot! If we were spotted, we should own up that it was a joke on Tom Merry, and old Tiper would be satisfied."

"Yes, he'd be satisfied when he'd marched us to the Head for a flogging. I'm not taking any!"

"Funk!"

"Same to you, and many of 'em!" grinned Mellish; and he strolled away, whistling.

Levison scowled and walked away to the New House. He did not want to undertake the raid alone, and Clampe of the New House was his last chance of getting help. He found Clampe in his study, smoking a cigarette and reading a sporting paper.

Levison explained his mission, and Clampe's reply was short, if not sweet:

"Rats!"

"So you funk it, too?" growled Levison.

"I'm not going to start as an enterprising burglar!" grinned Clampe. "I advise you to let it alone, too. It's too thick. Have a cigarette, and don't talk rot!"

Levison accepted the cigarette and lighted up. "Better let the 'Weekly' alone," advised Clampe. "You've still got a fat nose where D'Arcy punched it. Those beasts cut up too rough over a joke—your sort of jokes!"

"I'm going, all the same! Oh!" ejaculated Levison, as the study door opened.

Clampe started up in alarm.

Mr. Ratcliff strode in.

The cigarettes were in full view. Levison and Clampe simply blinked at the Housemaster.

It was possible that Mr. Ratcliff had scented
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smoke on the occasion of his previous visit to Clampe's study. At all events, he was evidently suspicious and watchful. And the two young rascals had been caught fairly in the act now.

"So this is the cause of your visits to this House, Levison?" said Mr. Ratcliff. "Your object is to initiate the boys of my House into the vicious practices of the School House!"

"I—I—"

"Both of you will follow me to my study!"

"Oh crumbs!" murmured Clampe in dismay.

Mr. Ratcliff rustled away, with the two dismayed juniors following him. In his study he selected a cane.

"Clampe, I shall punish you for smoking, but not so severely as Levison. I have little doubt that you were led into it by the School House boy."

Clampe did not speak. He was only too glad to get off lightly. As he was older than Levison he might reasonably have been considered more to blame; but Mr. Ratcliff chose to take the view that Mr. Railton's House exercised a corrupting influence on the New House, over which he himself held sway.

"You should be more careful in choosing your associates, Clampe. Hold out your hand!"

Swish!

It was a severe cut, but it was all; then Mr. Ratcliff turned to Levison of the Fourth.

"Hold out your hand, Levison!"

Levison looked sulky.

"If you please, sir, I'd rather be reported to my own Housemaster!"

"I do not choose to take that course, Levison!" said Mr. Ratcliff, with a sneering laugh. "Mr. Railton's view of offences committed in my House is altogether too lenient. If you choose to bring your disgusting habits of smoking into the New House, you must take the consequences. I shall punish you myself, and you may report the matter to Mr. Railton if you choose. Once more, hold out your hand!"

"You've no right to cane me!" said Levison.

"Indeed!"

Mr. Ratcliff said no more. He grasped Levison by the collar with his left hand, and lashed him with the cane in his right.

Levison roared with pain as the heavy lashes descended on his shoulders and back. When Mr. Ratcliff had finished with him, he was bundled, breathless and gasping, out of the study, and the door closed on him.

Clampe followed him down the passage.

"You duffer!" said Clampe. "Why did you cheek him? It only makes him worse!"

"I'm going to my Housemaster about this," said Levison, between his teeth. "The rotter has no right to cane me!"

"Well, you have no right to smoke in the New House, if you come to that," grinned Clampe.

"Oh rats!"

Levison, white with pain and rage, hurried across the quadrangle to Mr. Railton's study in the School House. He knocked at the door, and Mr. Railton bade him enter.

The Housemaster regarded his white, furious face curiously.

"What is the matter, Levison?"

"Mr. Ratcliff has caned me, sir—thrashed me with a cane in his study!" burst out Levison. "I appeal to you for protection, sir, as my Housemaster!"

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"What cause did you give Mr. Ratcliff to punish you, Levison?" he asked. "You must have been in the New House."

"I was in Clampe's study, sir."

"Mr. Ratcliff did not punish you, I presume, simply because you were in Clampe's study?"

"N-no, sir. Clampe offered me a cigarette, and—and I was just trying it to see how it tasted!"

"You were smoking in Clampe's study, Levison," said Mr. Railton sternly. "I should have preferred Mr. Ratcliff to report the matter to me, as you belong to my House. Since it has come to my knowledge, however, I shall deal with the matter. Hold out your hand!"

"Wha-a-at!" gasped Levison.

"Hold out your hand!"

Mr. Railton took up his cane. Levison had to obey.

Swish, swish!

"You may go, Levison," said Mr. Railton, laying down the cane. "On the next occasion your punishment will be more severe."

Levison of the Fourth left the study with feelings too deep for words. He had received two lickings instead of one, and he had not had even the satisfaction of causing trouble between the two Housemasters. Certainly Levison's luck was out!

CHAPTER 7.

In the Night!

PERCY MELLISH looked very curiously at Levison when the Fourth Form went up to the dormitory that evening.

Levison did not catch his eye, however. Mellish was wondering whether the black sheep of the Fourth intended carrying out his scheme that night on his own. Levison had nerve enough for anything.

The juniors turned in, and at eleven o'clock there was silence and slumber in the dormitory. But as the last stroke of eleven died away Mellish was awakened by a shake.

He blinked up at Levison. He knew that the shadowy form beside his bed was Ernest Levison.

"Are you coming with me?" whispered Levison.

"No fear!"

"Well, I'm going alone, then, you rotten funk!"

"Better chuck it. There'll be a row."

"Rats!"

Levison disappeared into the shadows, and Mellish settled down to sleep again. A risky adventure of that kind was not at all to Mellish's taste.

Ten minutes later Levison of the Fourth dropped from the school wall into the road. He tramped away towards Rylcombe in the darkness.

The scheme he had outlined was not difficult, but it required a good deal of nerve to carry it out. If Levison was discovered on Mr. Tiper's premises at that hour of the night, the result was likely to be serious. He could explain to Mr. Tiper that it was only a joke, but it was very doubtful indeed whether the printer would see the joke.

But Levison did not hesitate. He let himself in through the garden gate at the back of Mr. Tiper's house, and cautiously approached the building.

The office of the "Rylcombe Gazette" and the printing works were both in the same building, in another part of which the Tiper family

resided. Levison had visited the place before, and he knew his way about.

The junior flattened his nose against a dark window, and peered in.

He could dimly make out the shape of the printing machine and the benches in the room. The occupied part of the house was in darkness. The Tiper family had gone to bed.

The window was fastened by a common catch, and the sashes were old and loose. With hardly a sound, Levison forced back the catch with his penknife and pushed up the lower sash.

His heart beat faster as he clambered in at the window. Once inside, he closed the window and drew the blind carefully. He could not work without a light, and he did not want the light to show.

He listened for a few moments with beating heart, but there was no sound in the building.

He scratched a match at last and lighted the gas. He turned it half on, then he looked about him hastily.

He believed that the copy of the "Weekly" was already set up, and he soon found that he was not mistaken. There was a good deal of type set up, and Levison glanced over it curiously.

The "Rylcombe Gazette" was set up, as well as the "Weekly." Levison glanced over the columns—the stodgy articles and the columns of advertisements. His face broke into a sudden grin.

"My hat! What a lark!"

The idea had come into his mischievous brain of making some alterations in the type of the

"Gazette." Mr. Tiper, having left it all ready for printing in the morning, would not be likely to notice any change. Levison chuckled softly.

But he devoted his attention to the "Weekly" first.

He selected the forme in which Lowther's comic column was set up. He coolly extracted several lines of type, and then, helping himself from the case, he set up his limerick in the place of one of Monty Lowther's little jokes.

His work on the "Weekly" done, Levison listened again at the door.

But there was no sound to alarm him.

Mr. Tiper was sleeping the sleep of the just at a distance from the printing office, little dreaming that a practical joker was at work.

Levison ran his eyes over the columns of type that were to fill the advertisement pages of the local paper.

His eye lingered on the column headed "Wanted to Purchase."

"Bulldog wanted. Good price given for really good animal. Call any time after five o'clock.—A. J., Black Bull, Wayland."

Levison's eyes glimmered.

He helped himself to some more type, and removed the name and address from the advertisement. In its place he set up: "Call any time Saturday afternoon.—Mr. Ratcliff, New House, St. James' School."

Farther down the column was another advertisement, which ran:



The New House master, with a thunderous brow, halted in the doorway of the study. He looked at D'Arcy's flushed and battered countenance, and at Levison & Co., who were groaning over their injuries. "What does this mean?" snapped Mr. Ratcliff.

"Second-hand bicycle wanted. Must be cheap and in fair condition.—T. Thatcher, Oak Tree Lane; Rylcombe."

That name and address Levison altered to those of Mr. Ratcliff, adding: "Call Saturday afternoon."

Farther down the column it was stated that a gentleman desired to dispose of discarded clothes, several suits almost new. "Apply by letter to J. J., care of this paper."

Levison cheerfully replaced the last line with: "Apply personally to Mr. Ratcliff, New House, St. James' School."

The young rascal rubbed his hands and chuckled. He was looking forward to Saturday afternoon, and the various callers who would arrive for Mr. Ratcliff. By the time the New House master had finished with them, he would have reason to regret that thrashing he had bestowed upon Levison.

And he was not done yet.

In the next column was a "displayed" advertisement:

"MONEY LENT

Any sum from Five Pounds to Five Thousand on Note of Hand alone.

A gentleman makes loans on Favourable Terms with strictest secrecy. The Gentleman being in a responsible position, his clients can rely upon Fair Play and Absolute Discretion.

J. Screwer, Rose Dale, Wayland."

Levison suppressed a chuckle.

"What a joke on Ratty!" he murmured.

In a few minutes "J. Screwer, Rose Dale, Wayland," was changed into "H. Ratcliff, New House, St. James' School."

Then Levison calmly lifted a paragraph, and set up a new one in its place to the following effect:

"If William Bull, of Wayland, will apply to H. Ratcliff, New House, St. James' School, on Saturday afternoon, he will hear something to his advantage."

Levison chuckled spasmodically over that precious paragraph. William, otherwise known as Billy Bull, was the worst character in Wayland. When he was not in prison for being drunk and disorderly, he was generally qualifying himself for a new stretch. If he came upon that advertisement—and it was pretty certain to be pointed out to him—William would certainly call upon Mr. Ratcliff at St. Jim's—to hear of something to his advantage.

He might anticipate that he had come into a fortune, or that an inheritance was waiting for him to claim it; certainly he would anticipate something. And he was certain to cut up exceedingly rusty when he found that Mr. Ratcliff, so far from having anything to his advantage to offer him, would not even know why he had called, and would undoubtedly order him out on the spot.

"I rather fancy Ratty will be sorry for himself on Saturday!" grinned Levison. "But—my hat, I shall have to keep this jolly dark!"

He turned out the gas, and slipped through the window, closing it carefully behind him. With cautious steps he made his way out of the garden, and took the lane to St. Jim's.

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The Fourth Form dormitory was silent when Levison came into it with noiseless steps.

Mellish was fast asleep, and Levison did not awaken him. He did not mean to confide his latest exploit even to Mellish; it was necessary to keep the identity of the author of those advertisements exceedingly dark.

Levison turned in quietly, and was soon asleep.

He was a little heavy-eyed as he turned out at the clang of the rising-bell in the morning.

Mellish eyed him curiously.

"Did you go to Rylcombe?" he asked, as they went downstairs.

Levison shook his head coolly.

"No. I thought it rather risky, after all."

"Liar!" grinned Mellish. "It's all serene, though! Mum's the word!"

CHAPTER 8.

Mr. Ratcliff on the Track!

MR. RATCLIFF paused, his brows knitting.

He was coming away from the School House after morning lessons, Mr. Ratcliff being master of the Fifth as well as Housemaster.

He paused under the elms in the quadrangle on his way to the New House, and, as it happened, two juniors of the Fourth were in conversation there. They had their backs to Mr. Ratcliff, and apparently did not see him coming.

They were Levison and Mellish, and Levison was saying:

"I hope, for their sakes, Mr. Ratcliff won't see it."

Then Mr. Ratcliff paused.

Any other master of St. Jim's, excepting, perhaps, Mr. Selby, would have passed on without deigning to listen to words apparently not intended for his ears. But Mr. Ratcliff was not like that, as Levison very well knew. Mr. Ratcliff intended to hear more.

"But are you sure—" began Mellish.

"Well, I can't be sure, of course," said Levison. "They don't let me see 'Tom Merry's Weekly' before it goes to press. But I've heard about it, and I'm sure Mr. Ratcliff would be very angry if he knew that he was being made fun of in the school paper. I shouldn't wonder if he complained to the Head about it. I don't approve of it myself. I consider it disrespectful."

Levison and Mellish walked on, without turning their heads.

Mr. Ratcliff gazed after them.

The New House master was a suspicious man, but he did not suspect that the crafty Levison had got up that little scene for his especial benefit, in order to put him on the track of the offensive limerick.

"Oh, indeed!" murmured Mr. Ratcliff. "Indeed! So the impudence of those young rascals has been pushed to that extent—actually in making fun of a master in the columns of a school paper! We shall see!"

Mr. Ratcliff walked on to his own House. If there was some impertinent reference to himself in the "Weekly," Mr. Ratcliff intended to know all about it.

He called Figgins of the Fourth into his study.

"I understand, Figgins, that you have something to do with a—er—a kind of publication belonging to the juniors?" he said.

"Yes, sir," said Figgins, in surprise. "The 'Weekly,' sir."

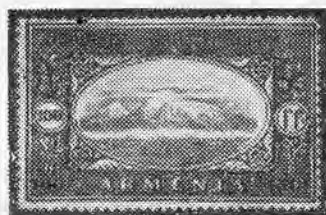
"A new number is forthcoming, I think?"



William Tell's small son tries out father's cross-bow—an interesting stamp for a "weapons" collection.

BE A STAMP SPECIALIST

Specialise in stamps—it is more satisfactory than aiming for a general collection next to impossible to complete!



Mount Ararat, shown on this Armenian stamp, is the reputed resting-place of the Ark, after the Flood. This is a gem for a "places" set.

HAVE you got to the stage with your hobby when you feel that a general collection is more than you can cope with? Since stamps came into use, over fifty thousand different varieties have been issued, and the general collector, despairing of ever catching up, sooner or later finds himself faced with many blanks in his album pages which it is next to impossible to fill. With most of us this state of affairs arrives surprisingly soon after we've "learnt the ropes" of collecting.

NATURAL DEVELOPMENT.

What's to be done? The answer is simple—specialise. To many collectors the idea of specialising savours of the crank. But if you use common sense in the matter it should be the natural development of your hobby.

You aren't long a collector before you find that you like certain kinds of stamps more than others, or certain countries hold more attraction for you, maybe because their stamps are more plentiful or more strikingly designed. The problem of how to narrow down your collecting interests is thereby solved straight away. Specialise in the stamps you're most keen on.

From time to time we shall deal with novel, out-of-the-ordinary specialist collections at fair length. Here, however, let just a few suggested subjects suffice.

Quite cheap but very interesting "specialities" can be formed from stamps depicting coats-of-arms, animals, ships, soldiers, weapons, maps,

"We're expecting it to-day, sir. Mr. Tiper has promised it for to-day. If you'd like a copy, sir, I'll bring you one at once, sir," said Figgins, rather flattered by his Housemaster's interest in the paper.

Mr Ratcliff gave him a searching glance. If there was any impertinence in the paper, it was pretty clear that Figgins was not a party to it.

"You do not read all the contributions in the paper, Figgins?" he asked.

"Oh, I generally look them over, sir."

"But before they are printed?"

"Oh, no, sir. When we have proofs sent, every chap corrects his own proofs. This time we hadn't any."

"When do you expect the paper to arrive, Figgins?"

"After lessons, sir."

"Does Mr. Tiper deliver it personally?"

"He sends his boy with it, sir, and it's left with Taggles," said Figgins, in wonder.

"Very good!" said Mr Ratcliff. "You may go, Figgins!"

Figgins went, very much surprised. He did

railway trains, transport generally, insects, native types, aeroplanes, and so on.

POSTMARK COLLECTIONS.

Unusual and even less expensive are postmark collections. To form one of, say, Great Britain, select post offices in towns of three thousand people upwards. With the aid of a map and a post office guide make a list of these towns, and then set about collecting stamps bearing the various postmarks.

The interesting point about this collection is that every British stamp you encounter is a "possible" for your album, and the inner knowledge of the towns of our country so gained will prove a great boon if you find yourself "weak" in geography.

Obviously, an ordinary stamp album is useless for mounting collections of this description. If you can afford one of the excellent loose-leaf albums on the market you'll be in clover. On the other hand, an ordinary exercise book with stout leaves makes an excellent substitute, while better still is plain typing paper. With the last you have an extremely cheap mounting material which enables you to change the order of your album leaves with practically no wastage.

Should you, however, prefer still to go in for general collecting, why not narrow down your field to types only? That's to say, if, as usually happens, only one design is used for a whole stamp series, collect only one specimen of that series—for pocket reasons, the lowest value.

not like the look in Ratty's eyes, as he confided to Kerr and Fatty Wynn.

The New House master left the House again and walked down to the lodge to see Taggles, the porter.

"Taggles, you will receive a parcel this afternoon from the printer's in Rylcombe," he said. "It will be addressed to Master Merry, I think."

"Yessir," said Taggles. "Master Merry's expectin' his paper, sir."

"When you receive that parcel, Taggles, you will bring it to my study, in the New House. If I am not there, leave it on my table. It is necessary for the paper to be examined before it is allowed to pass into circulation among the boys."

"Yes, sir," said Taggles.

Mr. Ratcliff went in to lunch feeling satisfied. If there was an impertinent reference to himself in that number of the "Weekly" it could not escape him now. His eyes would be the first to see the "Weekly."

Tom Merry & Co. were anticipating the THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,573.

delivery of the paper that afternoon, little dreaming of the arrangements Mr. Ratcliff had made.

After lessons the schoolboy editors strolled down to the lodge.

They found Taggles there, but there was no sign of the bundle of papers from the "Rylcombe Gazette" office.

"Has it come, Taggles?" asked Tom.

"Yes, Master Merry."

"Well, where is it, Taggy?"

"Which it's been taken to Mr. Ratcliff's study."

"What on earth for?" demanded Tom, in astonishment.

"Mr. Ratcliff's orders."

"Bai Jove!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

"That's wathah cool of Watty, even if he's keen to see the 'Weekly,' deah boys!"

"Blessed if I catch on!" said Tom, wrinkling his brows. "I don't see what Ratty wants with our paper. We'd better go and ask him for it."

"Yaas, wathah!"

Tom Merry & Co. proceeded to the New House. Mr. Ratcliff had returned there after leaving the Fifth Form Room, and they expected to find him in his study. But as they came up to the House doorway the Housemaster emerged.

The juniors started as they looked at him.

Mr. Ratcliff's face was white with anger, his eyes were gleaming, and he held a copy of the "Weekly" clutched in his bony hand.

He gave the juniors a dark glance and strode away towards the School House.

"Bai Jove!" ejaculated D'Arcy. "What's the mattah?"

"Something's up!"

"He had the 'Weekly' in his paw," said Blake. "Look here, you fellows, he's going to Railton, or the Head! You could see that. Some silly ass has been slating him in the paper, and he's got on to it."

"My hat!" said Tom suddenly. "Is it possible—"

He paused.

"What have you got in your head?"

"Levison's limerick. He said he would shove it in somehow. But—but he couldn't! He couldn't get at the copy after Tiper had it."

"Impossible!"

"Here's Figgins! Figgy!"

Figgins & Co. joined them, looking very grave.

"Something's in the wind," said Figgins.

"Ratty's gone out, looking like a madman—"

"Yes, we've just seen him. He's got the 'Weekly' in his study, and he had one number in his fist. What's the row?"

"Something in the paper," said Figgins. "He was asking me questions about it this afternoon, I remember. Which of you School House dummies has been slating our Housemaster?"

"Really, Figgins—"

Julian of the Fourth came scudding over from the School House.

"What the merry dickens have you fellows been doing?" he exclaimed. "Ratty—"

"What's he up to now?" asked Manners.

"He's gone into the Head's study with a face like a maniac! He's got a copy of the 'Weekly.' There's going to be trouble for somebody!"

The juniors exchanged anxious glances. Mr. Railton came out of the School House and beckoned to Tom Merry.

Tom approached.

"Follow me, Merry!" said the Housemaster severely.

"Yes, sir."

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Tom Merry followed him in, and his chums gathered in the doorway of the School House, in an anxious mood.

CHAPTER 9.

Mr. Ratcliff is Ratty!

D. R. HOLMES had retired to his study to enjoy a quiet hour with Euripides, when there came a rap at the door, and Mr. Ratcliff strode in.

The Head raised his eyes from his book, a look of surprise coming over his face as he noted the excitement in the New House master's manner.

"Dr. Holmes," Mr. Ratcliff gasped with wrath, "I must bring this to your notice! Such impudence—such unparalleled impertinence—"

"My dear Mr. Ratcliff—"

"I have here, sir, a copy of a junior publication; you have perhaps seen it—"

"Tom Merry's Weekly!" the Head smiled.

"Yes, I have seen it, Mr. Ratcliff. Surely there is nothing in it of an objectionable nature? I have glanced at several copies, at different times, and found them quite harmless."

"Look at it, sir!"

Mr. Ratcliff slammed the paper down on the Head's writing-table. It was open at Lowther's comic column. Mr. Ratcliff's bony finger indicated the offending paragraph.

The Head read it with astonishment. His brows darkened as he read:

"There's a rotter whose temper is catty,

Whose appearance is never quite natty.

His face makes you think

He's the real missing link;

And a rat couldn't be quite so ratty."

"The last word, sir," said Mr. Ratcliff, his voice trembling with rage, "is a pun on my name—a ridiculous, impudent pun. It is introduced in order that the writer may make plain the reference to myself, without actually mentioning my name!"

"You believe, Mr. Ratcliff, that this absurd jingle is intended to refer to you?"

"I am absolutely certain of it, sir."

"If it is so," said the Head, "such impertinence shall certainly be very severely punished. But it seems incredible that any boy should dare to refer to a master in such terms."

"There is no doubt about it, sir! Owing to some talk among the juniors, my attention was especially directed to this number of the paper. I made it a point to secure a copy at once. I find this. The reference to myself is direct. It is unmistakable. It is the work of a School House boy. The paper is run, I understand, by Merry of the Shell. Will you question him?"

"I will certainly do so at once."

Dr. Holmes rang the bell, and sent Toby to ask Mr. Railton to come to the study. The School House master arrived in a few minutes, and the Head handed him the paper.

Mr. Railton frowned as he read the limerick. He had no great esteem personally for his colleague; but he had a very great regard for discipline and good manners.

"Mr. Ratcliff supposes that that absurd rhyme refers to himself, Mr. Railton. What is your opinion?"

"I am afraid that such is the intention of it, sir," said the School House master. "It is inexcusable."

"Will you call Merry here?"

"Certainly!"

Mr. Railton left the study in quest of Tom Merry.

When he returned, the captain of the Shell followed him in, looking far from cheerful. It was only too evident that serious trouble was brewing.

"Merry!" The Head's voice was unusually stern. "Look at this, and tell me whether you are responsible for it."

Tom Merry looked at Levison's limerick. He had already guessed that it was there, though how it had come there was a mystery. He coloured under the stern gaze of the three masters.

"Well?" said Dr. Holmes

"I am not responsible for it, sir," said Tom. "It has got into the paper without my knowledge or permission."

"It is intended to refer to Mr. Ratcliff?"

"I—I suppose so, sir."

"You are editor of the paper, I think?"

"Yes, sir."

"Do you not examine the contributions before you put them into print?"

"Not always, sir. Only outside contributions," said Tom. "The staff—ahem!—can be relied on not to put in any rot like that."

"I see that the column is headed 'Comicalities,'" said the Head. "Which of the contributors is responsible for that column?"

"Lowther, sir. But Lowther did not write that limerick. It has been put into the paper without our knowledge."

Mr. Ratcliff sneered. To him that remark seemed a palpable falsehood, a flimsy attempt to escape responsibility. But it did not seem so to the Head or Mr. Railton, who knew boys better than Mr. Ratcliff did.

"How could this be inserted without your knowledge, Merry?" asked Mr. Railton.

"It was not in the copy when it left our hands, sir," said Tom. "The chap who wrote it must have got at the copy somehow after it left us, and put the thing in."

"Had you seen it before?"

"Well, yes."

"Then you know who wrote it?"

"Ye-es."

"Kindly give me the writer's name!" said the Head.

Tom was silent.

"I do not attach the slightest importance to Merry's denial," broke out Mr. Ratcliff. "This impertinence was evidently concocted by the whole party of them."

"Nothing of the sort!" exclaimed Tom indignantly. "That rubbish was offered me for the paper, sir, and I refused it. The fellow somehow got at the copy afterwards and put it in without my knowledge. That's all I know about it."

"I suppose that is possible," said the Head doubtfully. "After you had prepared the copy for the printer, Merry, what did you do with it? Was it left about your study?"

"No, sir. We took it down to the printer's."

"And delivered it to him?"

"Yes, sir."

"Then the person concerned must have tampered with the copy after it was in the printer's hands?"

"I suppose so, sir."

"That would surely be very difficult," said Mr. Railton.

"Yes, sir," said Tom honestly. "I can't understand how he worked it. But he did, for here is the limerick."

"Utter nonsense!" snapped Mr. Ratcliff.

"Merry must be given a fair hearing, Mr. Ratcliff," said the Head quietly. "You know the author of those impertinent lines, Merry. Is he a regular contributor to the paper?"

"No, sir. We never print anything of his, because he always has something hidden in what he writes—some mean trick or other, getting at somebody. He has taken us in like that once or twice, and we've made it a rule never to let him contribute."

"You say that he offered you this as a contribution?"

"Yes, and I refused it."

"Your friends, I suppose, could give evidence that this is the case?"

"Oh, yes, sir! Manners and Lowther and D'Arcy were present."

"Very good. I do not doubt your statement, Merry. But it is necessary for you to give the name of the writer of these lines. Otherwise you



"Gosh, only twopence a bottle! I thought it was expensive the way ma yelled when I spilled some on the carpet!"

Half-a-crown has been awarded to Miss K. Shaw, 1, Herondale Avenue, Wandsworth Common, London, S.W.18.

cannot complain if you are held responsible for them."

Tom Merry did not speak. If ever a trickster deserved to be given away, it was Levison of the Fourth. But Tom could not make up his mind to give him away. It was against the schoolboy code of honour.

The Head's brow grew sterner.

"Unless your statement is proved, Merry, you cannot expect it to be accepted," he said. "If you are held responsible for those rude and foolish lines, you will be flogged, and the paper will be permanently suppressed. Your statement that the copy was tampered with in the printer's hands seems to me extraordinary. It appears scarcely credible. I am willing to give you every chance, however."

"If I give you the name, sir, every fellow in the school will call me a sneak," said Tom desperately. "I'd rather be flogged than that."

Dr. Holmes paused.

Mr. Ratcliff sniffed impatiently, but the Head was patient, and he could understand.

"I am willing to make every possible allowance," he said at last. "It was, I presume, a School House boy who wrote those lines?"

"Yes, sir."

"Very well! I shall leave the matter in Mr. Railton's hands for investigation for the present. Mr. Ratcliff, you may accept my assurance that the delinquent will be discovered and severely

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punished. For the present, the matter rests here. You may go, Merry. But, understand this, unless it is clearly proved that the copy was tampered with after it left your hands, the paper will not be allowed to appear again."

"Yes, sir," said Tom.

He left the study.

Mr. Ratcliff watched him go, with an expression like that of a tiger who sees his victim escaping. But the Head's word was law, and Mr. Ratcliff did not venture to gainsay it.

CHAPTER 10. Rough Justice!

THERE was dismay among the schoolboy editors.

The fate of the famous "Weekly" was trembling in the balance.

Tom Merry & Co. held a council of war in Study No. 6. The whole edition of the "Weekly" had been suppressed, and duly burned by Taggles in his stove. But that was a small matter in comparison with the threatened total suppression of the paper.

The chums, of course, knew that Levison had somehow contrived to get at the copy in Mr. Tiper's office. But how he had done it was a mystery. They were agreed that they could not betray Levison to the Head. But it had to be proved, somehow, that some person or persons unknown had got at the "Weekly" after it was in Mr. Tiper's hands.

How that was to be done was a problem that baffled the juniors, for, on the face of it, the thing was unlikely. Mr. Tiper would have allowed any known member of the staff to call and make corrections, but he would not have allowed Levison to do so. And that matter was soon set beyond doubt, for Mr. Railton called on the Rylcombe printer, and after his return he sent for Tom Merry.

"I have seen Mr. Tiper," the Housemaster said quietly. "He assures me that after the copy of the paper was in his hands, it was not even seen by any boy belonging to this school. I supposed it possible that some boy might have called, under the pretence of being sent to make corrections in the sheets. Mr. Tiper assures me that such was not the case, and that the copy was set up exactly as it reached his hands."

Tom Merry wrinkled his brow.

"I can't understand how it was done, then, sir. But there's the original manuscript of the 'Weekly'—that is still at the printer's."

"True; but a page is missing."

"A page missing, sir?"

"Yes; the page from which the column of 'Comicalities' was set up. Apparently it became detached, and has been lost. It is very unfortunate."

"It's not an accident, sir!" exclaimed Tom excitedly. "The chap who altered the column must have taken that page away when he did it, so that it couldn't be proved afterwards."

"You mean that someone must have entered the printing office without Mr. Tiper's knowledge, and altered the type after it was set up in the formes?"

"I suppose so, sir."

"If anyone did so, he would doubtless destroy the original manuscript of the page he altered," said Mr. Railton. "Doubtless it was left on the bench. But that is an extraordinary allegation

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to make, Merry. You suggest that some boy belonging to this school broke into the printing office at night? He could not have entered unseen in the daylight."

"I know it sounds rather thick, sir; but it's the only thing that can have happened. I know that the type was set up overnight, and left for the printing to-day, because Mr. Tiper's new lot of paper hadn't come in. He told me so."

"I suppose such a thing is possible," said Mr. Railton, after a long pause. "It will be a



very difficult matter to prove, however." He looked hard at Tom. "In the circumstances, Merry, you would be more than justified in giving the name of the author of those lines. Unless it is clearly demonstrated that a forcible entrance was made into Mr. Tiper's office, and this alteration made in the type, the paper cannot be allowed to appear again."

"I know, sir," said Tom despondently. "But—but—" He broke off.

"Very well; you may go!"

Tom rejoined his chums in Study No. 6.

He related what had passed with the House-master.

"Levison, of course," said Blake, with a deep breath. "He must have broken bounds last night, and burgled Tiper's office."

"You didn't see anything of it? He's in your dormitory."

Blake shook his head.

"No; I was fast asleep. But there's no doubt about it. Not that it's much good knowing



With hardly a sound, Levison forced back the catch of the window with his penknife, and pushed up the lower sash. His heart beat faster as he clambered in at the window. If he was discovered on Mr. Tiper's premises at that late hour, the result was likely to be serious!

that, as we can't give Levison away to the Head.

"But we can jolly well hammer him!" growled Herries.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"We can't give Levison away," said Tom thoughtfully. "But if it's proved that somebody's burgled Tiper's office, that will be enough to see us clear."

"But how's that going to be proved? He can't have left any traces behind, or Tiper would know."

"It was Levison," said Tom. "He's as full of tricks as a monkey. He may have played some other rotten tricks there, for all we know. It would be like him to damage the machines, or upset the printer's ink. If anything of that kind has been done, it will come out, and it will prove that the office was entered at night. That will see us clear. Even Ratty wouldn't think that we burgled the printer's office to shove a paragraph into the paper, when we could have written it in the copy in the first place."

"Yaas, wathah! But suppose it doesn't come out?"

"Then the 'Weekly' is done for," grunted Tom.

"Let's go and see Levison," said Herries.

That suggestion was adopted at once.

The schoolboy editors proceeded in a body to Levison's study. Four juniors were there at work on their preparation. Both Levison and Mellish looked a little uneasy as the Co. came in.

Lumley-Lumley greeted them with a grin.

"You've put your foot in it this time, I guess," he remarked. "You must have been asses to slate Ratty like that!"

"We didn't," growled Tom. "A cad burgled the printer's office last night, and made alterations in the make-up of the paper."

"He, he, he!" chortled Trimble.

"What are you cackling at?" demanded Tom angrily.

"He, he, he! That's rather too thick," grinned Trimble. "You can't expect the Head to swallow that whopper."

"Bai Jove! Hold my eyeglass, Blake, while I give Twimble a thwashin'!"

Trimble jumped up.

"Hold on!" he roared. "I—I mean, I—I quite agree with what Merry says. Keep off, you beast! I—I really thought so all along."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Never mind Trimble," said Tom Merry. "Levison, you cad, it's time for you to own up!"

Levison stared.

"What are you burbling about?" he asked pleasantly.

"You told us you were going to shove that rotten limerick in, and you've done it. Now the 'Weekly' is going to be suppressed, so it's time for you to own up. If you've got a rag of decency, you'll do it."

"What limerick?" asked Levison.

"Yours—the one you brought to my study the other day."

"I don't remember bringing any limerick to your study," said Levison calmly. "And if you spin any yarn like that about me, I shall certainly deny it."

"Bai Jove!"

"It wouldn't be much good your denying it," said Tom Merry quietly. "There are plenty of witnesses that it was your limerick. But we draw a line at giving you away to the Head. You ought to own up."

Levison drew a breath of relief. He was prepared to lie; but he had a lingering doubt whether his falsehoods would find belief.

"I don't know anything about it," he said coolly. "Would you fellows mind buzzing off now? I've got my prep to do."

"Collar him!" grunted Herries.

"You've got us into a scrape, Levison, with

your dirty tricks," said Tom. "If you choose to own up, like a decent chap, the matter ends. If you don't, you'll get the ragging of your life."

"I'm owning up to nothing!" said Levison savagely. "And I jolly well hope that your rotten 'Weekly' will be suppressed! And if you touch me, you'll feel the weight of this!"

He caught up a ruler savagely from the table. It went flying from his hand the next moment, however, and Tom Merry's grasp was upon him. Levison struggled and yelled.

But the staff of "Tom Merry's Weekly" had no mercy on him.

The prospect of having the school magazine suppressed as a result of Levison's tricks incensed them too deeply. Levison had to have a lesson—and he had it!

The next minutes were like a very bad nightmare to Levison of the Fourth.

Lumley-Lumley dragged the table out of the way to give the ragers room.

Mellish dodged out of the study, fearful that his turn would come next.

Levison was bumped and rolled in the cinders and anointed with jam and ink and pickles, and generally ragged till he howled for mercy.

The terrific din in the study drew a crowd along the passage, who looked on grinning.

Levison had asked for it often enough, and now he was getting it.

"Look out, here comes Railton!" Talbot called from the passage.

Bump, bump, bump!
"Yow-ow-ow! Help!" shrieked Levison.
"Help, help!"

"Give him anothah, deah boys! Pewwaps he will let the 'Weekly' alone aftah this!" yelled Arthur Augustus.

Bump!
Mr. Railton strode in at the doorway.
"Cease this instantly!" he thundered.

"Oh, my hat!"
"Bai Jove! Wailton! Ahem!"
The ragers drew back, panting.

Levison rolled on the carpet, a pitiable object. Mr. Railton eyed Tom Merry & Co. sternly.

"Merry, what is the meaning of this?"
"It—it—it's a ragging, sir!" gasped Tom.

"Why have you attacked Levison in this manner?"

Silence!

"I can only conclude," said Mr. Railton, "that you suspect Levison of being the guilty party in connection with the incident in the school paper. Levison, stand up!"
"Groooogh!"

Levison struggled to his feet. He was almost unrecognisable under his coating of jam and ink and cinders and pickles. He panted with rage.

"Levison, did you break bounds last night and enter Mr. Tiper's printing office?" asked the Housemaster sternly.

"Groogh! No, sir!"

"But you are suspected of it, it appears."

"It's not true, sir!" gasped Levison, wishing he had not shouted quite so loudly for help.

"Very well, the matter remains to be proved," said Mr. Railton. "Merry, you and the rest will take two hundred lines each, and you will remain within gates to-morrow afternoon. Let there be no more of this!"

Mr. Railton strode away. He had little doubt how matters stood now.

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Tom Merry & Co. quitted the study, leaving Levison in a bitter temper.

Justice had been done, and it was worth two hundred lines and a gating.

All the staff of the "Weekly" were agreed upon that point.

CHAPTER 11.

Bike for Sale!

MR. RATCLIFF was surprised.

It was Saturday afternoon.

For some reason which Mr. Ratcliff could not understand in the least, he was an object of unusual interest to all the fellows at St. Jim's.

Every time he appeared in public the fellows stared at him and broke into suppressed giggles.

He was surprised, and he was angry.

It began with Figgins. Figgins had a copy of the "Rylcombe Gazette," which was published on Friday afternoon, and generally came along to St. Jim's on Saturday.

Some of the St. Jim's matches were reported in the local paper, and Figgins was looking for the reports when he came upon something else that amused him highly. And he burst into a laugh at the sight of Mr. Ratcliff coming down the passage.

Mr. Ratcliff boxed his ears on the spot. It was disrespectful of Figgins. Mr. Ratcliff did not connect his unseemly merriment with the "Rylcombe Gazette," a journal which did not number the New House master among its readers. But Figgins was only the first. After that every fellow Mr. Ratcliff came across seemed to be seized with an unaccountable fit of merriment at the sight of Ratty.

It was disrespectful, it was amazing, it was inexplicable, but there it was.

Tom Merry & Co. were within gates that afternoon—a penalty for punishing Levison. But they were not sorry after Figgins had shown them the "Rylcombe Gazette," and they had glanced over the advertisement column. There was a roar of laughter as they read.

"Bai Jove!" grinned Arthur Augustus. "Old Watty must be off his wockah! Fancy old Watty advertisin' as a moneylendah!"

"And advertisin' for a secondhand bike!" ejaculated Lowther. "What does he want with a secondhand bike? I should think he could afford to buy a new one, if he's going to take up biking in his giddy old age."

"And selling off his old clothes!" yelled Blake. "Trust Ratty to turn an honest penny."

"And what the thunder does he want to buy a bulldog for?" exclaimed Herries. "He doesn't like bulldogs. He's never liked Towser, I know that. And there's precious few bulldogs like Towser."

"And Billy Bull!" gasped Tom Merry. "Billy Bull of Wayland! That's that awful hooligan, you know—chap who's always squiffy and fighting the police when he isn't in chokey. What does Ratty want to see him for?"

"It's a giddy mystery."

"Bai Jove! Watty will have some wathah intewest in callahs this aftahnoon, deah boys! They will be worth seeing."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I'm blessed if I understand this!" said Figgins. "There would be a row if the Head knew that Ratty was advertising as a money-lender. And he's bound to know sooner or later."

"Wathah degwadin', bai Jove!"

"Tiper must have made some mistakes," said Talbot of 'the Shell. "Ratty can't really have put in those advertisements. It's too thick. Tiper must have got them mixed somehow."

"Perhaps he set them up after coming home from the Green Man!" chuckled Lowther. "It really looks like it."

"My hat!" exclaimed Tom Merry, a sudden light breaking in on his mind. "Levison!"

"Yes. We know he burgled Tiper's printing office to muck up the 'Weekly.' Ten to one he meddled with the type of the 'Gazette' while he was there."

"Bai Jove!"

"The cheeky ass!" exclaimed Figgins.

"After all, Ratty's our Housemaster."

"Ha, ha, ha! It's a good wheeze—for Levison, if he did it. Fancy Ratty's face when he gets the callers!" roared Monty Lowther.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The juniors yelled at the thought. On reflection, they had little doubt that the advertisements were Levison's work. It was simply inconceivable that Mr. Ratcliff could have inserted such advertisements, unless he was out of his senses. Certainly, he could not have advertised "Money Lent" without being called upon to resign his position at St. Jim's immediately the Head knew of it.

That afternoon it might have been noticed that the School House fellows found the neighbourhood of the New House very attractive. House rows were off—quite off. Everybody was interested in Mr. Ratcliff's prospective callers. Tom Merry & Co. no longer regretted that they were gated. They wanted to see whether there would be any answers to the advertisements in the columns of the local paper. The story of those weird advertisements spread through the school.

Mr. Ratcliff's rage and amazement increased minute by minute.

There was evidently some tremendous joke on, and equally evidently he was the object of it. He could see that, but for the life of him he could not divine what was in the wind.

A glance at the Rylcombe paper would have enlightened him, but naturally he never thought of glancing at it.

He retired to his study, fuming. He attributed the whole affair to some plot among the juniors, but he was quite mystified.

At three o'clock that afternoon a yell from Kerruish at the gates drew a crowd to the spot. A lad of about sixteen, in corduroys, was wheeling in an ancient-looking bicycle.

Taggles rushed out of his lodge like a lion from its den.

"Whatcher want 'ere?" he demanded.

"I come to see Mr. Ratcliff," said the youth, blinking at him. "I got this 'ere bicycle to sell." Taggles stared at him. He had not seen the "Rylcombe Gazette."

"You cheeky young rascal!" he ejaculated. "Hoff with you!"

"I tell you I come 'ere to see Mr. Ratcliff."

"It's all right, Taggy," said Blake. "Ratty's advertising for a second-hand bike. Look here."

Taggles simply gasped as Blake pointed out the advertisement in the local paper. He rubbed his nose and retired to his lodge.

The Rylcombe youth victoriously wheeled in the bike, Figgins obligingly showing him the way to Mr. Ratcliff's study. He left the youth knocking at the door.

"Come in!" called out Mr. Ratcliff irritably. The Rylcombe youth came into the study. He had left his bike outside.

"What do you want?" snapped Mr. Ratcliff, surprised and not at all pleased by the visit.

"I'm Joe Higgins," explained the visitor. "I've brought the bike."

"What?"

"It's a good machine, sir," said Joe Higgins.

"I want two pounds for it."

Mr. Ratcliff blinked at him.

"Are you out of your senses, boy? Tell me what you want here at once!"

"Ain't you Mr. Ratcliff?"

"Yes, yes."

"Then you're the gent who wants a second-hand bike," said Joe Higgins, in surprise. "If you'll step outside and look at it—"

"I suppose," said Mr. Ratcliff, glaring, "that this is some absurd practical joke! Leave my study at once!"

Joe Higgins looked surly. He had travelled a couple of miles with his old bike to answer that advertisement, in the hope of striking a bargain. Naturally he did not like being turned away like this, without the valuable machine even being looked at by the advertiser.

"Ain't you even going to look at the bike?" he demanded.

(Continued on the next page.)

Which of these would you like? they're FREE!



TANTALIZER PUZZLE. This is a really grand game for wet week-ends. **15 Coupons and Free Voucher.**

MODEL AERO-PLANE. Width 17 in., length 19 in. Flying instructions in the box. **84 Coupons and Free Voucher.**

CAMERA. Takes any 3½" by 2½" film. Gives excellent results. Instructions enclosed. **156 Coupons and Free Voucher.**

BOYS' FOOT-BALL. Cowhide leather, machine-sewn, with strong rubber bladder. **174 Coupons and Free Voucher.**

HERE'S ALL YOU HAVE TO DO

Just ask your mother to get some Rowntree's Cocoa. Every tin contains Free Gift Coupons — three in the quarter-pound size. You get coupons with Rowntree's Jellies, too.

Start collecting the Rowntree's Cocoa coupons right away. You'll soon have enough for your first gift.

SHOW THIS TO YOUR MOTHER

Rowntree's Cocoa, made by a special predigestive process, actually helps children to digest other food and get more nourishment from their meals.



The best way to start your collection is to send a postcard (postage 1d.) to Rowntree & Co. Ltd., Dept. OC41, The Cocoa Works, York, for the Free Gift Booklet, which includes a complete list of boys' and girls' gifts and a

Free Voucher Worth Three Coupons

"I refuse to do anything of the kind! Don't be absurd!"

"I brought it 'ere for you to see, sir. You advertised for a second-hand bike."

"Are you insane? I did nothing of the kind!" exclaimed Mr. Ratcliff, exasperated. "Leave my study, you insolent young rascal, and take your disrespectful jokes somewhere else! Another word and I shall chastise you!"

"Well, I'm blowed!" ejaculated Joe Higgins, in astonishment and anger. "Look 'ere, old codger, if you don't want a second-hand bike, wot did you advertise for a second-hand bike for?"

Mr. Ratcliff did not reply to the question. He jumped up and seized the cane.

Joe Higgins made a backward jump to the door, just in time to elude the lash.

"You silly old idjit!" roared Joe Higgins. "Wharrer yer up to? Are you drunk?"

Mr. Ratcliff dashed at him with the cane. His temper was quite out of control.

Joe Higgins gave him one blink and fled, quite convinced that the St. Jim's master was intoxicated.

Down the passage went the astounded and alarmed Higgins, with Mr. Ratcliff on his track.

There was a yell from Lowther in the quad.

"Here they come!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Joe Higgins came bolting out of the House, his eyes wide open with alarm. He grabbed the bike from the porch, hurled himself upon it, and pedalled away to the gates at frantic speed, amid shrieks of laughter.

Mr. Ratcliff halted on the steps, panting. He gave the crowd outside a glare, and strode back into the House.

Tom Merry & Co. almost wept.

CHAPTER 12.

Nothing Doing!

"G OOT-AFTERNOON, young shentlemen!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Welcome as the flowers in May!" chortled Figgins. "Come right in!"

It was Ikey Mo, the old clothes dealer of Wayland. He was a genial old gentleman, with a hooked nose, a broad smile, a shiny complexion, and a black bag.

The juniors had often seen him about Wayland, but they had never expected to see him visit the school. But here he was—evidently in answer to the advertisement in the "Rylcombe Gazette."

Ikey Mo seemed somewhat surprised by the hilarity of the juniors. But he grinned at them good-humouredly.

"I call to see Mr. Ratcliff," he explained, and there was a fresh yell of laughter.

"This way, Mr. Mo," said Levison. "Ratty's in the New House. I think he's waiting for you."

"Thank you, young shentleman!"

Ikey Mo followed Levison. That kind youth showed him into the New House, but not as far as Mr. Ratcliff's study. He did not want to interview Mr. Ratcliff himself. He called the House page, and handed Mr. Mo over to him.

Tuckle, the page-boy, stared at Ikey Mo in astonishment. However, he showed him in.

Mr. Ratcliff had calmed down a little when Mr. Mo was announced.

The visit was a surprise to the Housemaster.

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"Goot-afternoon, Mr. Ratcliff!" said Ikey Mo, as he entered the study.

"Good-afternoon!" said Mr. Ratcliff shortly.

"May I ask what you want here?"

"There is my card, sir."

Mr. Ratcliff stared at the card.

"I fail to see any reason for this call," he said acidly. "Kindly explain your business at once."

"I buys left-off clothes," said Mr. Mo. "I gives goot prices. Shentlemen's discarded clothes—"

"I have no desire whatever to dispose of my old clothes to a dealer. Good-afternoon!"

"I give you goot price," persisted Ikey Mo. "I takes zem away in zis bag—everyzing very select. You have ze old trousers and vaistcoats to sell? You vill find me an honest dealer."

"I repeat that I have no old clothes to dispose of!" exclaimed Mr. Ratcliff irritably. "I regard it as an impertinence on your part to call on me. Kindly take yourself off at once!"

"You think that I do not give goot prices?" Ikey Mo spread out his fat hands in eloquent gestures. "But everybody in Vayland vill tell you zat I am an honest man."

"Will you leave my study?" thundered Mr. Ratcliff.

"Zen you vish to do no business with me?"

"Certainly not! Go!"

"Zen what you advertise for and make a man vaste his time?" exclaimed Ikey Mo angrily. "My time is valuable, Mr. Ratcliff. I do not valk a long way for ze pleasure of ze valking!"

"You must be intoxicated, I think," said Mr. Ratcliff. "I have not advertised anything of the kind."

"You advertised in ze 'Rylcombe Gazette' zat you sell old clothes—"

"I did nothing of the sort!" roared the incensed Housemaster. "The suggestion is an insult. How dare you!"

"You advertised—"

"I did not!"

"You did!" shouted Ikey Mo, as angry as Mr. Ratcliff now. "Viz my own eyes I see him, and I think I vill valk here to oblige a shentleman. You are no shentleman, sir!"

"Leave my study, you low rascal, or I vill eject you!"

Ikey Mo's black eyes gleamed. He was a very genial and soapy gentleman in the way of business, but there was no business to be done here. And when there was no business to be done Ikey Mo was not to be insulted with impunity.

"Vat! I say zat you are no shentleman!" he roared. "You bring a man here to vaste his time and you insult him! You are an old rascal, sir!"

"Go!" thundered Mr. Ratcliff, advancing upon him. The angular Housemaster towered over the fat little clothes-dealer.

But Ikey Mo was not alarmed. He shook a fat and shiny fist right under Mr. Ratcliff's nose.

"You low scoundrel!"

"Low scoundrel yourself!" retorted Mr. Mo. "You lay a finger on me and I vipe up zis room with you! I goes ven I pleases myself!"

Mr. Ratcliff laid his hands on the fat gentleman's shoulder and swung him to the door.

Ikey Mo was as good as his word. He swung up his black bag, and it thumped on Mr. Ratcliff's chest.

The Housemaster staggered back and sat down on the study carpet with a heavy concussion.

"Now come on!" roared Ikey Mo, prancing round him. "You insults me, is it? You throw



As Mr. Ratcliff laid hands on him, Ikey Mo swung up his black bag, and it thumped on the New House master's chest. Mr. Ratcliff staggered back and sat down on the floor with a heavy concussion.

me out, after I talk to oblige you in the vay of business. Come on, you old twister!"

"Groogh!"

Monteith of the Sixth looked into the study in alarm.

"Is anything the matter, sir?"

"Monteith," Mr. Ratcliff gasped on the floor, "take that man—that ruffian—away! He has assaulted me! I—I— Take him away!"

"I come here to buy old clothes!" roared Mr. Mo.

"Better come away!" said Monteith.

"Zat old rascal advertise in ze paper zat he sell old clothes, and I come to buy zem in ze vay of business—"

"Yes, yes; come on!"

Monteith piloted the indignant dealer out of the study.

Mr. Mo voiced his complaints in loud tones as he was gently led to the door. He was indignant—which was not to be wondered at, in the circumstances.

Monteith succeeded in getting him out of the House, but Mr. Mo insisted upon halting in the quadrangle, to explain his grievances to the buzzing crowd there.

"Zat Ratcliff advertise zat he sell old clothes!" he roared. "I come here to buy zem! I give goot price for old clothes! Mr. Ratcliff is no shentleman!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Good old Ikey!"

"This way, for goodness' sake!" urged Monteith. He did not want to handle the old gentleman.

Mr. Mo allowed himself to be persuaded to the

gates, where he halted once more and delivered another speech, amid sympathetic cheers from the juniors.

Somewhat mollified by the sympathy of the St. Jim's fellows, Mr. Mo took himself off at last, leaving them shrieking.

"Who brought that man here?" demanded Monteith.

"He came on his own," said Levison meekly. "Ratty seems to have advertised about selling old clothes—"

"Nonsense!"

"Here it is in the paper."

Monteith's eyes almost bulged out as he looked at the advertisement.

"My hat!" he ejaculated. "Then why on earth did he cut up rusty with the old chap?"

"Most likely he wanted to beat the price down, and Ikey Mo wasn't having any," suggested Levison.

Monteith walked away, looking very puzzled.

The juniors howled.

"I wonder if there's any more coming?" gasped Tom Merry.

"Will you young gentlemen tell me which is the New House?"

The juniors swung round.

A seedy-looking fellow had entered at the gates. It was evidently another caller for Mr. Ratcliff.

"Certainly, sir!" said Levison. "You want to see Mr. Ratcliff?"

"Yes."

"This way, sir!"

The seedy gentleman followed Levison to the New House.

CHAPTER 13.

Very Pleasant for Ratty!

MR. RATCLIFF was still gasping in his study when there came a tap at the door.
"Gentleman wishes to see you, sir!" announced Tuckle.

The seedy gentleman was shown in.
Mr. Ratcliff endeavoured to compose his manner a little. But he did not look agreeable.

"Mr. Ratcliff?" asked the visitor.

"That is my name. What—"

"My name is Baggs—Joseph Baggs! I have called in reference to your advertisement in the 'Rylcombe Gazette.'"

Mr. Ratcliff's eyes gleamed.

"I have not," he began, breathing hard—"I have not inserted any advertisement in the 'Rylcombe Gazette.' I presume that you have come here to sell me a second-hand bicycle, Mr. Baggs?"

"Certainly not!" said Mr. Baggs, in surprise. "I am in need of temporary financial assistance, and—"

"What!"

"I understand that you make loans at moderate

business with you. The question is, can you advance me fifty pounds immediately?"

"No, sir!" roared Mr. Ratcliff. "I cannot!"

"Then what, sir, do you mean by advertising that you are prepared to lend sums from five pounds to fifty pounds?"

"I—I—I—"

"Let us come to business, sir! I am a busy man. I have come here to be accommodated with a loan. Upon what terms will you advance me fifty pounds?"

"I refuse to advance you a single penny, upon any terms whatever!" shrieked Mr. Ratcliff. "How dare you, a perfect stranger, come here and attempt to borrow money from me? I never lend money!"

"That is absurd, of course!" said Mr. Baggs coldly. "As you advertise your business as a professional moneylender—"

"Are you mad? How dare you say so! This is a plot to insult me!" shouted Mr. Ratcliff. "You are not the first insolent person who has visited me this afternoon!" The Housemaster rang the bell savagely. "Tuckle, show this man out at once!"

Mr. Baggs stared angrily at him.

"So you refuse to make me a loan, without even inquiring into the security I can offer you?" he exclaimed.

"Most decidedly!"

"Then, sir, you are a trickster!" exclaimed Mr. Baggs. "You are a swindler, sir! You advertise as a moneylender, and you have no money to lend! Your pretended business is a swindle! In what way, sir, do you hope to profit by your trickery?"

"Show that man out at once, Tuckle!"

"This way, sir!" gasped Tuckle.

"I will go!" shouted Baggs wrathfully. "But I shall go directly to the police-station, sir, and report this swindling business; and you may expect a visit from the police, Mr. Ratcliff, to look into your swindling moneylending business!"

Mr. Baggs' indignant voice rang through the New House. He condescended to stride away after Tuckle, when he had delivered his opinion of Mr. Ratcliff and his moneylending business.

Mr. Ratcliff sank back into his chair, gasping.

"Am I dreaming?" he murmured. "Unless I am dreaming, what does—what can this mean? It is amazing—incredible! It is a plot!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

It was a roar of laughter from the quadrangle.

Mr. Ratcliff jumped to the window and threw it open.

"How dare you!" he shouted. "Disperse at once! Do you hear me?"

The grinning juniors cleared off, still grinning. A coarse-looking man was coming towards the New House with a young bulldog under his arm.

Mr. Ratcliff blinked at him. After what he had gone through, he would not have been surprised if this man proved another visitor for him. And such, indeed, was the case.

He had scarcely seated himself, when there came a tap at the door, and the grinning Tuckle showed in the man with the bulldog.

Mr. Ratcliff blinked at him quite feebly.

"What—what—what do you want?" he stammered.

"'Arternoon, sir!" said the newcomer cheerily.

"I've brought 'im!"

"Eh—whom?"

"Toothy, sir!" said the man with a smile.

"That there bulldog, sir. And a better bred critter you never did see in your natural."



"If this happens again, I shall ask the Head to put a ban on all sky-rockets!"

Half-a-crown has been awarded to A. C. Davis, 20, Shafton Road, South Hackney, London, E.9.

interest, at the same time preserving the strictest secrecy.

"Are you mad?"

"I fail to understand you, sir," said Mr. Baggs, with asperity. "You are Mr. Ratcliff, and this is the New House, St. James' School, I presume?"

"Certainly! But—"

"Then you are the advertiser I wish to see. You lend money on note of hand alone?"

"I do nothing of the kind!" thundered Mr. Ratcliff.

Mr. Baggs smiled bitterly.

"I have had some experience of moneylenders," he said. "I must remark that they are all the same. After advertising that you lend money on note of hand alone, you demand security for a loan. Well, I was prepared for that. What security do you require?"

"I—I—I—"

"The loan I am in temporary need of is not a large one—a mere trifle of fifty pounds," said Mr. Baggs. "I am willing to pay five per cent interest."

"Sir!" gasped the outraged Housemaster. "How dare you!"

"To be quite plain, Mr. Ratcliff, I am in need of the money, and I am prepared to meet your terms, if not too onerous," said Mr. Baggs. "If you require ten per cent, I shall not refuse to do



THE EDITOR'S CHAIR.

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

HALLO, chums! I've got some good news for you this week. A grand new feature will be commencing in next Wednesday's number. The GEM is broadcasting a novel series of microphone interviews with well-known St. Jim's characters. One personality will be interviewed each week, and he will tell readers many intimate, interesting, and humorous points about himself. Tom Merry is the first chap to come under the fire of questions from our interviewer, and, as you will see, he is not at all "mike" shy! Our interviewer, by the way, is an expert at his job, for he has acted as a talent-spotter for the famous "In Town To-night" feature and the variety broadcasts of the B.B.C.

Readers will find these interviews witty, amusing, and full of interest. Listen-in next week when Tom Merry is "In Town To-day."

"THEY THOUGHT HE WAS A ROTTER!"

This is the title of the next great yarn of Tom Merry & Co., which Martin Clifford has written in his most convincing and dramatic style. I don't think readers would ever guess who is considered to be the rotter at St. Jim's, for he is the last fellow in the school one would suspect of shady conduct—none other than Gussy!

Levison & Co. discover that Arthur Augustus is having dealings with a disreputable bookmaker named Banks, and the cads of the School House do their

The visitor set the bulldog down. Mr. Ratcliff hastily stepped back.

The bulldog looked a thoroughly vicious brute; and Mr. Ratcliff had a horror of dogs.

"Look at 'im, sir!" said the visitor with pride.

"Ain't he a beauty?"

"Take it away!" said Mr. Ratcliff faintly.

The visitor looked surprised.

"Ain't you the gent who wants to buy a bulldog?" he asked.

"Certainly not!"

"That there young page said as you was Mr. Ratcliff!"

"I am Mr. Ratcliff. But—"

"This 'ere the Noo 'Ouse?"

"Yes; but—"

"Then you're the gent I want to see. I'm Bill 'Orrocks! You're the gent what advertised for a bulldog in the 'Rylcombe Gazette,'" said Mr. Horrocks decidedly. "I brought that there dorg here for you to see. If you ain't satisfied with it you say so! You say what's the matter with that there dorg!"

Mr. Ratcliff eyed the dog nervously.

"I—I—I am sure the—the dog is a—a first-class animal!" he gasped. "But—but I really do not want to purchase a bulldog, my man!"

"Then why," demanded Mr. Horrocks—"why did you advertise in the local paper for a bulldog?"

"I did not! It is some—some mistake! I

worst to show up D'Arcy before all his schoolfellows. Gussy's chums refuse to believe it of their chum, and they back up their belief with their fists—to the discomfiture of D'Arcy's detractors! But when Blake & Co. tackle Gussy upon the matter he frankly admits that he is friendly with Banks! His chums are flabbergasted. What has come over Gussy? Has he suddenly taken the downward path? That remains to be seen, when you read this magnificent story.

Next on the programme is Part 2 of Frank Richards' powerful yarn, "The Boy Without a Friend!" In these splendid chapters you will read how Mark Linley, the outcast of the Remove, finds a friend in Marjorie Hazeldene, and, thanks to her help, sees the condemnation of the Remove change to congratulations.

To complete this tip-top number, Monty Lowther invites you to laugh off some more wisecracks and jokes with him, our stamp expert has written another full-of-facts article, while there are more illustrated jokes, for which readers will be awarded half-a-crown each. Don't forget to see that your GEM is reserved for you, chums!

THREE TIP-TOP SCHOOL TALES.

I am receiving repeated inquiries about the new issues of the "Schoolboys' Own." This popular library publishes three splendid school stories every month—and, believe me, they sell like hot cakes! The next numbers will be out to-morrow, and, what will please GEM readers, there is a St. Jim's yarn among them! This is called "The Mystery of Holly Lodge!"—a thrilling Easter holiday yarn of mystery and adventure at Monty Lowther's home, where Monty and his uncle suddenly vanish! Then there is a gripping Greyfriars story—"The Downfall of Harry Wharton!"—and Nipper & Co. and Nelson Lee of St. Frank's are starred in "The Crook Schoolmaster!" These fine books cost fourpence each, and you couldn't find a better fourpennyworth of entertainment anywhere.

Before I close down I should like to draw the attention of readers to the several gifts illustrated on page 21, which are quite simple to obtain for the coupons in tins of Rowntree's cocoa. All you need do is to make sure your mother buys tins of Rowntree's, and then carefully collect the coupons. Meanwhile, send for a Free Voucher and a complete list of gifts. You will find the address to send to in the Rowntree's advertisement.

Chin-chin, chums!

THE EDITOR.

assure you that I did not do anything of the kind! Take that dog away!"

"And what about giving a man a jaunt for nothing?" said Mr. Horrocks daskly. "What 'ave you brought me 'ere for with that there dorg, if you don't want a dorg?"

"Good heavens! The man is mad!" moaned Mr. Ratcliff. "Take that dog away! Unless you take that dog away I—I shall telephone for the police!"

Mr. Horrocks glared.

"A man of your age playing tricks like that 'ere!" he ejaculated. "Well, I ain't the cove to be played with, I tell you that straight! I want five bob for my time coming over 'ere! That's straight!"

"I shall pay you nothing! I did not ask you to come! Take that dog away!"

"Five bob!" roared Mr. Horrocks. "And little enough, too! 'And it over, or, by gum, I'll set the dorg on you, you silly old idjit!"

"I refuse! I—I—"

"Seize 'im, Toothy!"

Mr. Ratcliff uttered a yell of affright as the cheery Toothy promptly made a rush. He leaped on his chair.

"Call that dog off!" he shrieked.

"'Ave 'im, Toothy!"

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The bulldog made a jump at Mr. Ratcliff's legs, and Mr. Ratcliff bounded on the table.

Toothy pranced round the table, growling and showing his teeth. The mere sight of his teeth gave Mr. Ratcliff a cold chill.

"Call him off!" he protested. "I—I will pay you five shillings! I—I protest, but I will pay you five shillings! Call him off!"

"Money talks!" said Mr. Horrocks.

Mr. Ratcliff fumbled in his pocket and produced the five shillings.

"Little enough, too, arter the trouble you've given me for nothing!" snapped Mr. Horrocks, as he slid the money into his trousers pocket. "You take my tip, old 'un, and make up your mind whether you want a dorg or not afore you advertise for a dorg! Come 'ere, Toothy!"

And Mr. Horrocks quitted the study, with Toothy at his heels, much to Mr. Ratcliff's relief. The Housemaster sank into his chair again. He almost felt that he was in the grip of a nightmare, and would awaken presently.

A chuckle reached his ears, and he glanced round and saw the study window lined with faces.

They disappeared at once, but the chuckling could still be heard.

Mr. Ratcliff was providing a rare entertainment that afternoon for the St. Jim's juniors, and Tom Merry & Co. were enjoying it.

CHAPTER 14.

Something to His Advantage!

"**H**A, ha, ha!"
"Oh, my hat! What an afternoon!"
"How ripping for Ratty! Ha, ha, ha!"

Tom Merry wiped his eyes.

But the laughter was hushed a little as Mr. Railton came striding from the direction of the School House.

Mr. Railton had observed that something very unusual was going on, and he had come to look into it.

The juniors looked as demure as they could. Just as the School House master arrived on the scene, a peculiar figure slouched in at the gates, and there was a gasp from the juniors:

"Billy Bull!"

It was William Bull, of Wayland, evidently visiting St. Jim's to "hear something to his advantage." The market town loafer was a little uncertain in his gait. Probably his pals at the Black Bull had been standing him something on the strength of his supposed good luck.

Mr. Bull staggered and lurched a little. His battered hat was on the back of his head, and a cigarette was in the corner of his mouth. In one hand he held a copy of the "Rylcombe Gazette."

Mr. Railton, as he spotted that tattered and battered figure, transferred his attention from the juniors to Mr. William Bull. He strode towards that gentleman, with a frowning brow.

"What do you want here?" he asked.

Billy Bull leered at him.

"You Mr. Ratcliff?" he asked.

"No. You have no business here, my man!"

"I come 'ere to see Mr. Ratcliff."

"Nonsense!"

"To 'ear something to my advantage," said Mr. Bull. "That's 'ow it is in the paper. I come into a fortune—wot? This 'ere Mr. Ratcliff is a solicitor, I s'pose—hey?"

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"Mr. Ratcliff is a Housemaster here. What do you mean?"

"Look at this 'ere!" said William Bull, holding out the paper. "I come 'ere to 'ear something to my advantage. Don't give me any jaw! I come 'ere to see Mr. Ratcliff!"

Mr. Railton simply blinked at the advertisement. Certainly, according to that perfectly plain notice, Mr. Bull had a right to visit Mr. Ratcliff and hear of something to his advantage.

"Bless my soul!" said Mr. Railton. "This is very extraordinary!"

"Where's that there Mr. Ratcliff?"

"Follow me!"

Greatly perplexed and puzzled, Mr. Railton led the visitor to the New House. Billy Bull leered at the juniors, and followed him in.

"Oh crumbs!" ejaculated Levison. "There'll be a row if that merry codger doesn't hear of something to his advantage."

"And there'll be another row if they find out who shoved that advertisement into the 'Gazette'!" grinned Lowther.

"Of course, I don't know anything about that," said Levison.

"Rats!"

"Yaas, wathah! Wats!"

Levison shrugged his shoulders. His little joke could not be brought home to him, he felt sure, and that was all he cared about.

Mr. Railton tapped at the New House master's door and entered. Mr. Ratcliff started up, with a gasp. Evidently it was another visitor.

"This man has called to see you, Mr. Ratcliff," said the School House master; and he stepped back, and Mr. Bull entered.

"I refuse to see him!" shouted Mr. Ratcliff. "I—I will not endure this persecution! I will appeal to the police for protection!"

"'Arternoon!" said Billy Bull affably. "You're Mr. Ratcliff—wot? Legal gent, I s'pose? Well, 'ere I am!"

"Who are you? What do you want?"

"William Bull—that's me! I come 'ere to 'ear something to my advantage! I come into a fortune—wot?" said Mr. Bull, rubbing his grubby hands. "You got the money?"

"The man is mad or drunk!" exclaimed Mr. Ratcliff. "Leave my study at once!"

"I come 'ere—"

"Go!"

"But wot about this 'ere advertisement?" roared Mr. Bull. "Wot's this about something to my advantage?"

"Nonsense! You are intoxicated! Leave my study! I will telephone to the police! Mr. Railton, do not go—I beg you to remain! I will not be persecuted by this rufian!" shrieked Mr. Ratcliff, almost beside himself.

His nerves had suffered severely that afternoon.

"Look at the paragraph in this 'ere paper!" shouted Mr. Bull. "I come 'ere to answer this!"

"There is certainly an advertisement in the paper, Mr. Ratcliff," remarked Mr. Railton. "This man has called to see you—"

"I inserted no advertisement! It is a lie—a trick!"

"But it is there—"

"Nonsense!" shouted Mr. Ratcliff.

"Kindly look at the paper yourself, sir," said Mr. Railton.

Mr. Ratcliff looked at the "Rylcombe Gazette" in Billy Bull's grimy fist, and his eyes almost



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Miss I. Good, 150, Victoria Road, Middlesbrough, Yorks; girl correspondents; age 15-17; sports and things in general; European countries, Norway, Sweden, U.S.A.

Miss K. Almond, 25, Laburnum Avenue, Swinton, Manchester; girl correspondents; age 11-12; reading and music; Scotland or Ireland.

Miss E. Squire, Trungle, Gwinear, near Hayle, Cornwall; girl correspondents; age 14-16; stamps and general topics; anywhere in the British Empire.

A. Johnson, 70, Chichester Road, Seaford, Sussex; age 12-14; pen pals; stamp collecting, films; British Empire.

V. C. Tipping, "Cul-Edan," 36, Northland Road, Londonderry, North Ireland; registered letter labels; anywhere except Canada, S. Africa and England.

M. Husin, Anderson School, Ipoh, Perak, Malaya; pen pals; age 12-17; sports and photography; anywhere.

J. R. Tarrant, 28, Fitzroy Street, Kerribilli, Sydney, N.S.W., Australia; age 17; stamps, newspapers, photos; anywhere.

P. Taylor-Archer, 48, High Street, Newport, Isle of Wight; age 10-12; general topics of interest; Canada, France, Australia.

A. Flitcroft, 188, Todmorden Road, Burnley, Lancs; conjuring and sleight of hand tricks.

K. Viney, 13, Tryent Grove, West Hendon, London, N.W.9; fretwork, model making out of wood; British Isles.

started from his head. He sank back limply into his chair.

"I am not responsible for that! I—I begin to understand now. It is some infamous practical joke. My name has been used. It is atrocious!"

"A blooming joke, is it?" roared Mr. Bull, exasperated. "You bring me 'ere all the way from the Black Bull for a joke, you stoopid old donkey? I'll teach you to play your kid jokes on me, you silly idjit!"

And Billy Bull made a rush at Mr. Ratcliff, and whipped him out of his chair in a twinkling. He was justly exasperated.

"Help!" screamed Mr. Ratcliff. "Mr. Railton, I beg you—Help, help!"

Punch, punch, punch!

Billy Bull was angry, and he pommelled the unhappy Housemaster without mercy. Fortunately, Mr. Railton was there. But for the presence of the School House master, Mr. Ratcliff would have suffered severely. But Mr. Railton dashed to the rescue, and dragged the angry Billy Bull away.

"Lemme alone, bust you!" roared Billy Bull. "I'm going to give 'im a 'iding! I'll squash his monkey face for him! Leggo!"

Mr. Railton shouted for Monteith and Baker.

The New House master had dodged round the table, yelling with terror; there was no help to be expected from him.

Miss E. Levy, "Sylberta," Chesterfield Road, Orangezicht, Capetown, S. Africa; girl correspondents; age 14-16; story writing, swimming, and stamp collecting; anywhere.

K. Brand, 71, Long Drive, Acton, London, W.; stamps; anywhere.

J. T. Maury, 16, Beckett's Park Drive, Headingley, Leeds, 6, Yorks; pen pals; age 12-16; stamps, Scouts, photography; British Empire.

M. Aiton, 11, Lobnitz Avenue, Renfrew, Scotland; pen pals; age 14-16; stamps, sports, etc.; China, Japan, S. Africa, Jamaica, Gold Coast, Burma.

Miss V. Westover, Good Hope Seminary, Hope Street, Gardens, Capetown, S. Africa; girl correspondents; age 14-16; stamps, sports, and dancing.

R. Forman, "Tresco," Middle Road, Ravenhill, Swansea, S. Wales; wireless, sport, films and general topics; U.S.A. or any part of the Empire.

W. T. Evans, 8, Gellifaelog Terrace, Penydawen, Merthyr Tydfil, S. Wales; pen pals; age 13-18; stamps, coins, sports, and any general topics; anywhere, especially America.

H. Molyneux, 56, Hampden Street, Walton, Liverpool; pen pals.

A. Foulkes, "Hillbue," West Cagney, Stoke-on-Trent, Staffs; age 14-17; animals, curios, stamps, horticulture; anywhere except Europe; all letters answered.

L. Lipson, 523, Bank Street, Ottawa, Ontario, Canada; age 11-20; stamps; anywhere.

Miss M. Baird, 92, Fewgrange Road, Cairn, Dublin, Ireland; girl correspondents; age 19 and over; reading, cycling, football, snapshots, general topics; overseas.

R. Sutton, 88, Leix Road, Cairn, Dublin, Ireland; age 26-30; football, reading and general topics; overseas. J. Overhill, 90, Shelford Road, Trumpington, Cambridge, would like to communicate with readers who have back numbers for sale, from No. 1221 onwards.

Miss F. Maybrowitz, 95, Gordon Road, Judiths Paarl, Johannesburg, S. Africa; girl correspondents; age 16-20; anywhere.

A. Bass, 8, Melrose Mansions, Melrose Road, Muzeriburg, S. Africa; age 14-16; stamps, sports.

H. Waltman, 90, Darling Street, Capetown, S. Africa; age 16-17; stamps, photos, books, etc.; all over the world.

PEN PALS COUPON

9-4-38

But Monteith and Baker of the Sixth dashed into the study.

Billy Bull was collared, and whirled out into the passage, still roaring.

"Lemme get at him! I'll smash his ugly mug! I'll spoil his blooming beauty for him! Yah! Let me get at the old monkey face!"

But Billy Bull was not allowed to get at "old monkey face." Two or three more Sixth Formers lent a hand, and Billy Bull was rushed out of the New House and down to the gates, and deposited in the road.

"Calm yourself, Mr. Ratcliff," said Mr. Railton. "The man is gone."

"Good heavens!" Mr. Ratcliff mopped his nose, which was streaming red. "The awful ruffian! He has assaulted me! I am injured! He shall be arrested—sent to prison! Groogh! Wow-ow!"

Mr. Ratcliff collapsed into his chair, gasping for breath and mopping his nose wildly.

Outside in the quadrangle there was an hysterical yell:

"Ha, ha, ha!"

All St. Jim's howled over Mr. Ratcliff's extraordinary adventures that eventful afternoon. But

(Continued on page 36.)

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HE WAS BARRED BY HIS FORM-FELLOWS FOR SNEAKING—YET HE WAS INNOCENT!

The Boy Without A Friend!

By FRANK RICHARDS.

(Author of the grand long yarns of Greyfriars appearing every Saturday in our companion paper, the "Magnet.")

The Ragers!

"IS he coming, Bulstrode?"

"Not yet."

"Look out—"

"I'm looking out, fathead! Keep quiet!"

It was very dark in the Remove passage at Greyfriars. As a rule, two lights burned in the passage, but they had been turned out now.

The three or four juniors who crouched in an alcove half-way down the passage were invisible to anybody who might pass. It was an ambush.

Bulstrode, the bully of the Remove, was watching in the darkness, and the other fellows in the alcove behind him were ready to rush out at a signal.

Bulstrode was looking along the passage towards Study No. 1. A glimmer of light came from under the door, visible from where Bulstrode stood.

"He's a jolly long time!" growled Stott. "Perhaps he's staying to tea with Wharton."

"I don't suppose so. I know he went to borrow a Greek lexicon," said Bulstrode. "We'll give him Greek!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Shut up, you ass, Snoop! If he hears you cackling, he'll know we're here."

And there was silence in the passage. Bulstrode keenly watched the streak of light under Harry Wharton's door, waiting for that door to open, and for Mark Linley to come out.

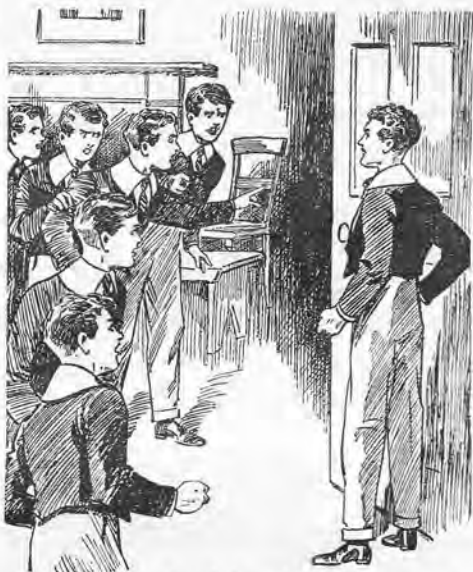
There was a long grudge against Mark Linley among a certain section of the Remove—the Lower Fourth Form. That he had come to the school on a scholarship which he had won by hard work ought to have been a recommendation, but Bulstrode and his friends chose to regard it as quite the reverse. A fellow who had worked in a Lancashire cotton mill for a living, was, in their opinion, quite out of place in the Greyfriars Lower Fourth.

Linley was a keen student, a keen footballer, and a fine fellow in many ways; but some of the Form refused to see it. Some had made a set against him from the moment he came to Greyfriars, and he was still "cut" by several fellows in the Form.

Mark had taken it all quietly. He was pleasant to those who were decent to him, and avoided the others. But Bulstrode & Co. were not willing to give up their grievance. And the fact that Harry Wharton & Co. backed up Linley was quite sufficient to set Bulstrode against him, if there had been nothing else.

More than once Linley had been ragged, but things had sometimes turned out very uncomfortable for the ragers. But Bulstrode was not done yet. He had conceived the scheme of tarring and feathering the lad from Lancashire,

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Mark Linley stared in astonishment at the crowd of hostile Removites. "Sneak!" Bulstrode shouted out the word. It was echoed by the others in a roar of condemnation. "Sneak! Cad! Get out!"

as a strong hint that it would be better for him to get out of Greyfriars.

Even the holdest of the Removites shrank a little from the scheme; but Bulstrode had his way, as he usually did in such matters, and so the ambush was laid.

All was ready in Bulstrode's study for the punishment to be inflicted on the Lancashire junior when he was captured. It only remained to capture him.

"I say, Bulstrode!" murmured Skinner.

"Don't jaw!"

"Yes, but look here, you'll have to be careful. If they hear anything in Wharton's study, we'll have the lot on us."

"They mustn't hear anything, duffer! I'll collar the cad as he comes by, and jam this coat over his head, and you can grip him. We'll have him into my study in a jiffy!"

"Yes, but—"

"Oh, shut up!"

Silence again. There was the sound of a door-handle turning, and Bulstrode gave an excited whisper to his followers.

"He's coming! Look out!"

The door of Study No. 1 swung open. The light gleamed out into the passage, and in the light stood the well-set figure of Mark Linley.

He seemed surprised to see the passage dark, but he did not stop. He closed the door behind him, and came along the passage.

As he arrived abreast of the alcove, Bulstrode

MARK LINLEY, SCHOLARSHIP BOY, IS UP AGAINST IT IN THIS GREAT YARN OF THE CHUMS OF GREYFRIARS.

sprang upon him. Linley reeled back with a stifled exclamation. But the coat was over his head, and the cry was muffled. In a second more the Removites were grasping him, and he was swung off his feet.

"Got him!" muttered Bulstrode, with grim satisfaction.

There was a cry in the shadows. It came from Snoop.

"Shut up, you fool!"

"He—he's banged me on the nose!"

"Serve you right! Shut up and bring him in!"

Mark Linley, vainly struggling in the grasp of four pairs of hands, and half-suffocated by the coat round his head, was whisked along the passage and into Bulstrode's study.

A junior who was working at the table there jumped up in surprise. It was Hazeldene, who shared the study with Bulstrode.

"What the dickens—" he began.

"Hold your row!" said Bulstrode.

"Who have you got there?"

"It's Linley. We're going to tar and feather him!"

"Hang it all, Bulstrode, that's going a bit too far!"

"Mind your own business! Lock the door, Snoop!"

"I'm not going to have a hand in it," said Hazeldene quickly. "Let me get out! You fool, there'll be a row about this!"

"Get out, if you like, but mind, not a word!"

"It's no business of mine."

Hazeldene left the study, and Snoop locked the door. Mark Linley was struggling still, but he had no chance against so many. There was a tarpot standing in the grate. It had been purloined from a shed which Gosling, the porter, was tarring. A pillow lay in the chair, ready to be torn open. All was ready, but Mark Linley was not a tame victim.

He wrenched his head free from the enveloping coat, and glared about him. His eyes were blazing, and his temper, usually quiet and calm, was evidently at white heat.

"You—you cads!" he shouted. "Let me go!"

Bulstrode chuckled.

"No fear! Hold him tight, you chaps! Look here, Linley! Do you see that tarpot?"

"Yes, I see it."

"And that pillow?"

"Yes. What about it?"

"Well, my lad, we're going to tar and feather you; but we'll let you off on one condition," said Bulstrode loftily. "You've been told before that you're not wanted at Greyfriars. This is a Public school, and not a home for the deserving poor."

"Ha, ha, ha!" cackled Skinner.

"You may be all right in the mill you belong to," went on Bulstrode, "but you're not wanted at Greyfriars. You understand?"

"I understand."

"Well, if you promise to leave quietly at the end of the term—"

"I'll be hanged if I will!" exclaimed Linley.

"You're a cad, Bulstrode, and a coward, too, or you wouldn't attack a fellow four to one. I gave you a licking once. I'm ready to give you another."

Bulstrode gritted his teeth.

"'Nuff said!" he exclaimed abruptly. "We'll

go ahead, and I dare say you'll find out that there are more comfortable places for you than the Greyfriars Remove. Yank that tarpot out here, Stott!"

"Right you are!"

The tarpot was placed in the middle of the room. Snoop slit the pillow with a penknife, and the contents rolled out in a heap on the floor.

"Now then—the tar first!"

Mark Linley struggled desperately. The four juniors grasped him and dragged him towards the tarpot. But so desperate were the efforts of the Lancashire lad that they all had their work cut out to hold him.

"Look out!" yelled Bulstrode.

Linley's foot crashed against the tarpot. It rolled over, the contents streaming out on the carpet and mixing with the feathers. Bulstrode made an effort and hurled Linley into the midst of the spilt tar.

But the Lancashire lad clung to him like a cat and dragged him down also, and they rolled in the tar.

"Oh!" roared Bulstrode. "Ow! Leggo! Oh!"

They rolled over and over, and the other juniors, fearful of being dragged into the horrible mess of tar and feathers, loosened their hold on Mark and jumped away.

The Lancashire junior had only one foe to tackle, and he proved that he was quite able to take care of himself on fair terms.

He grasped Bulstrode firmly by the neck and rolled the Remove bully over again, and jammed his face fairly into the tar and feathers. Bulstrode gave a muffled shriek.

He tore his head away from the sticky mess. His features had disappeared in a mass of tar and feathers.

"G-r-r-r-r!"

Mark Linley sprang to his feet.

His flashing glance fell upon the other raggars, and they sprang back from him. He looked dangerous.

But Linley's blood was up now.

"Come on!" he shouted.

They did not come on. They were more afraid of the sticky, smeary tar than of the fists of the Lancashire lad. But they were not to escape. Mark was so tarry already that he could scarcely become more tarry. He rushed on Skinner and dragged him down, plumping him fairly in the tar, and sending him sprawling across the gasping Bulstrode.

Stott and Snoop made a simultaneous rush for the door. The ragging of the Lancashire lad was not turning out exactly as they had intended. He was getting tarred and feathered, but so was everybody else, and the study was getting into a fearful state.

They grabbed at the locked door at the same moment, but Mark was upon them in a second. He grasped Stott and hurled him upon Skinner, and then turned upon Snoop. But Snoop had the door open now, and was leaping out into the passage. Mark's boot was planted behind him, and he fairly flew.

The Lancashire junior turned round to look at the three raggars struggling up from the floor.

They were in a fearful state. Mark was as badly off himself; he was smeared all over with tar, and his clothes were utterly spoiled. He stood looking at the raggars for a moment with

blazing eyes, and then, controlling himself, he turned and left the study.

Called Over the Coals!

"I SAY, you fellows— My only hat! Ha, ha, ha!"

Billy Bunter stared into Bulstrode's study in amazement, and burst into a yell of laughter.

The fat junior had just come upstairs, and seeing Bulstrode's door open, he had glanced in. He saw Bulstrode, Stott, and Skinner staggering up, smothered with tar and feathers, and looking as shocking a sight as had ever been seen within the ancient walls of Greyfriars.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Bunter.

"Clear off!" exclaimed Bulstrode fiercely, and he picked up a cricket stump.

The fat junior scuttled off down the passage, still yelling with laughter.

He burst into Study No. 1 with an impetus that he could not control, and dashed right into the table, at which four juniors were sitting at work.

The table went flying, and so did a variety of books and papers, and inks and pens, and there was a yell of wrath from four angry juniors.

"I'm sorry," gasped Bunter, "but—but—"

"You young ass! See what you've done?"

"I—I couldn't help it! Ha, ha, ha! Ow! Don't shake me like that, Bob Cherry! You'll make my glasses fall off, and if they get broken you'll have to pay for them."

"What do you mean by bolting in here like a wild jabberwock?" roared Bob Cherry, still shaking the fat junior.

"Ow! Bulstrode's after me!"

Bob Cherry looked towards the door. There was no sign of the bully of the Remove. He had not followed Billy Bunter far.

Bunter, finding that he was not pursued, after all, became a little more reassured, and gave a fat chuckle.

The chums looked at their ruined exercises on the floor, and then at the chuckling junior, and made a simultaneous movement towards him.

Bunter promptly dodged.

"Hold on! I'm sorry; but it was so funny, you know, Ha, ha, ha!"

"It won't seem so funny when I've jolly well rubbed your chivvy in ink!" growled Bob Cherry.

"I wasn't laughing at that. It's Bulstrode!"

"What's the matter with Bulstrode?"

"Come and see."

Billy Bunter's explosions of mirth excited curiosity in Study No. 1, and they followed the fat junior down the passage.

Safe with the Famous Four, Bunter returned boldly enough to the dangerous quarter. The sounds of angry voices were proceeding from Bulstrode's study.

The juniors looked in at the open door.

"My only hat!" gasped Bob Cherry. "Ha, ha, ha!"

And the chums roared with laughter. They could not help it. The carpet was in a terrible state with tar and feathers. Bulstrode, Skinner, and Stott were smothered, and they were shouting furiously at one another. The disaster had naturally been followed by a quarrel among the unsuccessful raggers, and they were "slanging" each other at the top of their voices.

They turned round and glared at the chums as they heard them at the door.

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"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" gasped Bob. "Have you been having an argument with that tarpot? What's the trouble, anyway?"

"Mind your own business!" snapped Bulstrode.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, get out, do!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bulstrode made a rush at the door; but he hesitated to tackle the four, and he slammed the door instead. The laughter of the juniors rang along the passage, and speedily attracted other fellows to the spot.

And every moment after that Bulstrode's door was opened by some curious junior, who sent a yell of laughter into the study and then fled.

"Wonder what the trouble is?" said Harry Wharton, as they walked away "What on earth can Bulstrode have been doing with a tarpot and a lot of feathers in his study?"

"Tarring and feathering one another," grinned Nugent. "That's what they've been doing, whether they intended it or not."

"The tarfulness and the featherfulness are terrific," murmured the Nabob of Bhanipur. "Ah, what is this?"

There was a patter of rapid footsteps in the passage.

The light had been turned on now, and the chums, as they turned their heads, saw a breathless junior racing along.

It was Snoop. He signed to them frantically to get out of the way, and they stood aside, and he dashed on.

After him came a junior whose features were almost covered by black smears of tar, and whose clothes were tarry and feathery from head to foot.

"Great Scott, who's that?"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!"

"It's Linley!"

Mark Linley ran on. He was evidently in pursuit of Snoop, and Snoop was trying hard to escape. He dodged and doubled in the upper passage, and made a break for the stairs. But down the stairs on his track went the Lancashire junior.

The chums of the Remove stared at them in blank astonishment.

"What on earth's the matter?" exclaimed Wharton in perplexity. "It's not like Linley to get his rag out like that. And how did he get into that state?"

"Great Scott! Look!"

"My hat!"

The chums, looking over the banisters, could see a gowned form on the first landing; it was that of Mr. Quelch, the master of the Remove. But Snoop, in his headlong flight, did not see him; he rushed fairly into his arms, and Mr. Quelch caught him by the collar and stopped him with a jerk.

"Ow!" roared Snoop. "Leggo! Oh, I—I—I— Mr. Quelch!"

"What does this mean? Dear me! What is that?"

Mark Linley burst upon the scene the next moment; he stopped breathlessly at the sight of Mr. Quelch.

The Form-master looked at him blankly.

"What—who are you? Is it Linley?"

"Yes, sir!" gasped Mark.

"What are you doing in that state?"

Linley was silent.

The Form-master looked from one boy to

the other, and something of the truth dawned on him.

"Ah, I presume Snoop was responsible for your getting into that state, Linley, and you were—er—going to punish him?"

Still the Lancashire junior did not speak. He had certainly been going to give Snoop his due share of the tar and feathers, as was only just, but he had nothing to say to the Form-master. He knew that if Bulstrode's scheme became known it would be serious for the bully of the Remove. Though Mark Linley had suffered many a grievance at the hands of the Remove bully, he was the last fellow in the world to sneak.

Mr. Quelch looked at him hard, and then turned to the gasping Snoop.

"Snoop!"

"Ye-e-es, sir?"

"What does this mean? How did Linley get into this state?"

"I—I—I—"

"You were responsible for it?"

"N-n-no, sir; it—it was Bulstrode."

Mark Linley's lip curled scornfully. He would have been flogged before he would have betrayed his enemy. Snoop had betrayed his friend without scruple.

"Ah!" exclaimed Mr. Quelch. "I might have guessed that, I think. Where is Bulstrode?"

"In—in his study, sir."

"Follow me there, both of you."

The juniors obeyed. Three or four fellows were chucking outside Bulstrode's door. Micky Desmond had just opened it and looked in and retreated, shrieking with laughter. The ragers were trying to scrape the tar off, but without much success.

"Faith, and it's a soight!" said Micky. "I—Hullo! Cave!"

And the sightseers scuttled off as the Remove master came in sight. Mr. Quelch walked up to the door and threw it open.

"Get out, you silly beast!" roared Bulstrode. "I'll— Oh, I beg your pardon, sir! I—I thought it was Desmond."

Mr. Quelch looked sternly at the tarry juniors. "I shall require a full explanation of this," he said quietly. "Whose idea was it to bring the tar into the study, Bulstrode?"

The Remove bully assumed a dogged expression. His eyes fairly blazed as they turned on Mark Linley. He not unnaturally jumped to the conclusion that Mark had brought the Form-master to the study.

"Mine, sir," Bulstrode replied, with a touch of defiance in his manner.

"And why was it brought here?"

"We meant to tar and feather that rotter."

"Are you alluding to Linley?"

"Yes, sir."

"And why do you allude to him as a 'rotter'?"

"He's a rank outsider, sir."

Mr. Quelch compressed his lips.

"I presume you mean that you dislike him because he is here on a scholarship, and has previously worked for his living. Is that it?"

"I—I—I—"

"Have you any other cause of complaint against him?"

"I—I suppose not. This isn't the proper place for fellows who've worked in a mill."

"There are thousands of fellows who have worked in mills, Bulstrode, who are better boys, and will be better men, than you can possibly be.

I cannot help despising you for your snobbery, Bulstrode. I am ashamed to have such a boy in my Form."

Bulstrode turned red under the tar. Mr. Quelch had a bitter tongue when he chose to let it go.

"You have acted in a callous and cowardly way, Bulstrode. You have been guilty of petty spite and malice. You have persecuted a boy who has given you no cause of offence. I am afraid that it is only the natural dislike of a mean nature for a manly one that has caused you to dislike Linley."

The expression on Bulstrode's tarry face was a study.

"Now," resumed Mr. Quelch, "I should severely punish such a freak as this in any case. In the circumstances, I shall administer the severest punishment in my power. Bulstrode, I shall report this matter to the Head, and you will be called up to-morrow morning for a flogging."

The Remove bully's bravado left him instantly. A caning he could have stood, but a public flogging at the hands of Dr. Locke was another matter.

"Oh, sir!"

"I cannot let you escape more easily than that, Bulstrode. I must impress the lesson fully on your mind. The other culprits I shall cane myself, and they will come to my study as soon as they are clean."

And Mr. Quelch turned towards the door.

Mark Linley went out of the study with a troubled expression. It was in a sense through him that Bulstrode was to be flogged, and it troubled him. In the passage he ventured to stop Mr. Quelch.

"If you please, sir—"

"Go on, Linley," said the Remove master kindly enough.

"Could you—could you let Bulstrode off a bit more lightly, sir?" stammered Mark hurriedly. "I—I can't help feeling it's partly my fault."

Mr. Quelch shook his head.

"No, Linley. I admire your spirit in speaking up for one who has only injured you, but the malignancy Bulstrode has shown must have a fitting punishment."

He strode on with rustling gown. It was useless to say more, and Mark knew it. And the Lancashire junior went on slowly to his own study.

The Sneak!

THERE was a full minute of silence in Bulstrode's study after Mr. Quelch had gone. The four juniors were stricken with dismay. Bulstrode was pale where tar did not obscure his skin; and Skinner and Stott were very grim.

Snoop was very nervous. He had betrayed Bulstrode, and for the moment he did not reflect that the Remove bully was unaware of it. He waited for the storm, not even making a movement to quit the study, lest it should bring the bully's wrath down upon him sooner.

It was Stott who broke the grim silence.

"I say, it's rough on you, old man!"

"Beastly rough!" said Skinner. "I don't see why Quelch wanted to take such a serious view of it. After all, it was only a joke."

"And how the deuce did he know anything about it, either?" added Skinner. "He couldn't have known unless—"

"I suppose he saw the row of fellows out there, and—"

"Not a bit of it!" said Skinner. "He knew all about it before he came in, and he brought in Linley and Snoop with him. How did it happen, Snoop?"

Bulstrode, who had not spoken yet, turned to Snoop with a blaze in his eyes that told of the savage rage in his heart.

"Yes, how did it happen?" he asked. "Did Linley fetch Quelch here on purpose, Snoop?"

Snoop drew a quick, quivering breath. Until this moment, it had not occurred to him that he might escape the punishment due to a sneak by throwing the blame on another.

Now the thought rushed into his brain like lightning. Bulstrode's question made the lie only too easy.

"Yes," he said.

Bulstrode gritted his teeth. He was only too glad to believe evil of Mark. The blacker Mark could be painted, the more justified Bulstrode felt in his hatred for him.

"The rotten sneak!"

"The miserable worm!" said Stott. "Why, there's not a fellow in the Remove would have told if he had been flogged!"

"What can you expect?" said Bulstrode bitterly. "This worm has been brought up in a slum, and worked among cads all his life. It's only what we might have looked for. I've said so all along."

"Yes, that's true enough; you were down on him from the start."

"I knew the kind of chap he was certain to turn out. I wonder what Wharton & Co. will say when they know of it? What will the Form say?"

"We'll jolly well give him a showing-up."

"Yes, rather!"

"I—I say," muttered Snoop, "are you going to make a Form matter over it? Better let the poor beast alone. After all, he's—"

"Oh, don't be a fool, Snoop! Why, you've been hard on him up to now!" exclaimed Bulstrode, in astonishment. "We're going to show him up. He'll be sent to Coventry by the whole Form. This is where we have a chance of getting rid of the cad for good. We'll make the Remove too hot to hold him."

"Blessed if I can get this tar off!" said Skinner. "I'm going to try with some hot water in the bath-room. Ta-ta!"

And he left the study. The others followed him. But the attempts to remove the tar were not very successful. In spite of the greatest efforts, very visible traces of it clung to Stott and Skinner when they, with Snoop, presented themselves at Mr. Quelch's study to take their punishment.

The three received half-a-dozen severe cuts each. They left the room wriggling with pain, and Snoop seemed to suffer most. He never could stand pain, and now he was simply doubled up. As he wriggled and writhed, his dislike for Mark Linley was strengthened by his sufferings. His last scruple had vanished now. Unreasonably enough, he put down the severe caning to the account of the Lancashire lad, and felt that in branding Linley as a sneak, he was only somehow "getting his own back."

The contortions of the three sufferers attracted the general attention of the Junior Common-room when they entered it. A circle of sympathisers surrounded them, and listened to their tale of woe. And the story that Linley had betrayed

the raggers to the Form-master excited deep and general wrath.

"It was rough on him to be tarred," said Trevor. "And Bulstrode was a cad—"

"Oh, was I?" said Bulstrode savagely.

"Yes, you were! But that doesn't excuse Linley for sneaking. I was beginning to like that chap, too. It shows that you never know a fellow."

"You never know how one of these cads will turn out," said Skinner. "We've treated him well enough—h'm—well, quite as well as he could expect, anyway. And now for him to turn on us like this!"

"Caddish!"

"Rotten!"

"Beastly!"

"Rats!" said Russell. "You've treated him like cads—"

"Look here, Russell, if you're going to back up a sneak—"

"I'm not! I say you've treated him like cads," said Russell cheerfully. "But that doesn't justify his turning sneak. I dare say he was in a temper, but a decent fellow wouldn't have sneaked. As far as I'm concerned, I shan't speak to him again."

"Nor I!"

"Same here!"

"That's the idea!" said Bulstrode. "I've got to be flogged to-morrow morning through that unspeakable cad."

"Shame!"

"But I don't care, if it shows the rotter up in his true light. He ought to be sent to Coventry by the whole Form."

"That's the idea!"

"Send him to Coventry!"

"Faith, and if he's a snake—"

"Who said he was a snake?"

"Ha, ha, ha! Micky means a sneak."

"Sure, and if he's a snake, he ought to be sent to Coventry!" said Micky Desmond. "But how do ye know he gave you away to the Quelch spalpeen, Bulstrode?"

"Snoop heard him—and Quelch marched into my study at once, bringing Linley with him."

"That's how it was," said Snoop. "It was on the landing Quelch caught Linley with the tar on his face, and asked him how he got like it."

"I suppose the silly ass blurted it out?" said Hazeldene.

"Whether he blurted it out or not, he gave Bulstrode away, and there's a flogging to follow," said Skinner.

"And he's got to be sent to Coventry."

"And serve him jolly well right."

"And if Wharton backs him up—" said Bulstrode, striking the iron while it was hot, so to speak.

"We'll jolly well send Wharton to Coventry, too, if he does!" shouted Ogilvy.

"Good!"

"Hallo! Here comes the cad!"

Mark Linley came quietly into the Common-room. He had cleaned his face and hands and changed his clothes. The suit he was now wearing was not so good as the one he had been compelled to discard. Linley's people were poor, and his mother had difficulty in keeping her son clad decently enough for a school like Greyfriars. The ruining of a suit of clothes meant much to Mark—much more than the thoughtless juniors comprehended.

With this trouble on his mind, Mark did not look cheerful. His evening's work, too, had been spoiled by the ragging. He had finished his prep

early, and had intended to put in a couple of hours at Greek.

Greek was an "extra" at Greyfriars, and Mark could not afford it. But with the assistance of Harry Wharton and one or two kindly seniors who took an interest in the hard-working junior, he had taken the subject up, and was getting along very well with it.

Mark Linley had plenty to think about at that moment, and he did not notice the looks that were turned upon him as he came into the Common-room.

But he could not help noticing, a few moments after his entrance, a very audible sound that ran through the room.

"His-s-s-s-s-s!"

It was a prolonged hiss. There was no mistaking it; and the troubled junior's eyes were quickly raised. He looked round him in amazement. He knew nothing of Snoop's falsehood, nothing of the charge made against him and proved to the satisfaction of the Remove.

"His-s-s-s!"

The hiss was meant for him, that was certain. Why, he could not guess—unless it was simply a development of the campaign against him. But why should fellows who had not joined in the general attack—fellows who had been civil and even friendly—why should they be hissing him?

The Lancashire junior looked at the crowd, his face reddening.

"Sneak!"

Bulstrode shouted out the word. It was echoed by the others, in a roar of condemnation that rang through the room.

"Sneak! Cad! Get out!"

Linley stared at them. He did not understand. But it was impossible for him to make his voice heard. He spoke, but his words were drowned in the shout.

"Sneak!"

He turned suddenly and left the room. And still the bitter word followed him.

"Sne-e-e-eak!"

A Lesson for Bunter!

HARRY WHARTON was one of the last to hear of the matter. As captain of the Remove, he should naturally have taken the lead in the proceedings; but Bulstrode had been glad to leave him out of it. And as the chums of Study No. 1 were busy just then, it was easy for Bulstrode to effect his purpose.

The Famous Four had a matter to think of which was important enough to them. In a few days' time Cliff House College was to open. The new school fronted the sea at a short distance from Greyfriars, and its opening was a matter of interest to Harry Wharton & Co. To most of the Greyfriars fellows it was a matter of indifference.

If Cliff House had been a boys' school, they would have been interested enough. The prospect of fixing up football matches, or even of rowing with the fellows, would have been attractive. But it was a girls' school.

To the average boyish mind at Greyfriars, a girls' school was of infinitely less interest than the extinct craters in the moon. But there was one circumstance that keenly interested the chums of Study No. 1.

Hazeldene's sister was going there.

Marjorie Hazeldene was their chum, and the prospect of having her for a near neighbour was very pleasant. Bob Cherry was especially

pleased. He thought there ought to be some kind of welcome organised for the opening of the girls' school, and his chums fully agreed with him. The question was—what form should the celebration take. And, having finished their prep the Famous Four discussed that subject.

Billy Bunter sat in the easy-chair and listened. There was a peculiar self-satisfied smirk about Bunter's fat face which the juniors were too busy to notice.

"I say, you fellows!" said Bunter, speaking at last. But the discussion went on without a pause.

"It ought to be something really ripping, you know," said Bob Cherry. "Something worthy of the—the traditions of the Remove."

"Hear, hear!" said Nugent.

"The hear-hearfulness is terrific," murmured Harree Jamset Ram Singh.



Grasping Bulstrode firmly by the neck, Mark Linley rolled the Remove bully over and over in the tar and feathers, and then jammed his face fairly in the sticky mess. Bulstrode gave a muffled shriek. "Gr-r-r-r!"

Harry Wharton nodded.

"You're right. But how?"

"We shall have to think it out," said Bob.

"I say, you fellows—"

"I was thinking of a procession from the station."

"I say, you fellows—"

"Don't interrupt, Bunter. Can't you see we're busy?"

"Yes; but I say, you fellows, I've got a suggestion to make."

"Oh, go ahead!" said Bob Cherry resignedly.

"Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings, you know—Bunter may possibly have an idea."

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"Get on, and don't be so jolly long-winded!"

"Well, I think I ought to be consulted in this matter," said Bunter, smirking. "I suppose

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you know why Marjorie is coming to Cliff House?"

"Yes. Hazeldene says his people want her to be in a school as near him as possible, and it's only natural," said Wharton. "As a matter of fact, Hazeldene is a much more decent chap when his sister's about. And I dare say his people know that he's weak, and that Marjorie has a good influence over him."

"Yes, perhaps there's something in that," said Bunter. "But—"

"But what? What are you getting at? And what is the greasy smirk smearing over your fat chivvy for?" demanded Bob Cherry.

"Oh, really, Cherry! You see, I can't help seeing facts. You know jolly well how nice Marjorie is to me when she sees me—"

"She's nice to everybody," said Bob Cherry. "She's nice even to a worm like Snoop. I admit that most girls would bar a fat young porpoise like you—"

"Oh, really, you know! Of course, I don't mean to hint that I'm an—an Adonis," said Billy Bunter. "But there's a way about me that's taking with girls."

The four juniors looked at him.

"I'm not a chap to boast of a thing of this sort," said Bunter, mistaking their silence. "I'm only telling you fellows. Some chaps are attractive to girls, and some aren't. There's a good deal of luck about it. If Marjorie Hazeldene likes me, of course—"

"You miserable, crawling worm!" said Bob Cherry, in tones of intense disgust.

"I'm sorry to see petty jealousy—"

"What!" roared Bob Cherry.

"To see petty jealousy like this in you, Cherry. I know you're spoony on—"

"Hold your tongue, you fat ass!"

"Oh, very well! But as I was saying, it's not my fault if Marjorie likes me. I've never done anything in particular to encourage her. I've just treated her always with ordinary politeness. If she—"

Billy Bunter ceased suddenly.

He couldn't help it, for Bob Cherry had seized him by the shoulders, and bounced him out of the easy-chair. He was bumped against Nugent, who promptly shoved him off.

"Hang it all, Bob! Don't bring that thing near me!" he expostulated.

"Sorry. I know he's not fit for anybody to touch."

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

Billy Bunter bumped down on the hearthrug on his back. Bob Cherry put a foot on his chest and squeezed hard. The air escaped from Billy Bunter in a prolonged gasp, a great deal like escaping steam.

"Ow, ow! I—I'm sorry—"

"Now, you worm," said Bob Cherry, in concentrated tones, "you know jolly well that you ought to be suffocated, and buried behind a pigsty somewhere—"

"Hear, hear!"

"But there's a silly law against exterminating fat pigs when they happen to be bipeds," went on Bob Cherry. "So I'm going to give you a fearful licking instead—"

"Oh! Ow! Make him lemme get up, Wharton!"

"Not I," said Harry. "You're a young cad, and if Cherry doesn't lick you, I will!"

"You worm!" said Bob Cherry. "If Marjorie knew the kind of crawling reptile you are, she'd never speak to you again. A nice girl can't be civil to you without you thinking that—pah!"

"Ow! Lemme gerrup!"

"Get me the fives bat, will you, Nugent?"

"Certainly!"

"Ow! Wow! Lemme gerrup! I won't do it again—I mean—I—I won't— Ow! Wow!"

"Do you confess that you're a crawling worm, then, and a lying, stupid little beast?" demanded Bob Cherry.

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"Do you confess? Gimme that bat!"

"Yes! Ow—yes!"

"And you're not fit to speak to Marjorie?"

"Yes; no—no—"

"And you'll never be a conceited, stupid, flabby, little rotter any more?"

"Yes; no—no!"

"Right-ho! Then I'll let you off with a dozen," said Bob Cherry.

He grasped the fat junior by the collar, and jerked him to his feet, and the fives bat played on Bunter where his trousers were tightest.

Bunter hopped and yelled, but Bob Cherry was in earnest. He gave the fat junior a "batting" that made him squirm and wriggle, and then pitched him into the easy-chair. Bunter flopped into it, and lay gasping. He did not quite know whether Bob had been in earnest or not, but he knew that he was hurt.

"You—you beast, Bob Cherry!" he gasped.

"And Marjorie—"

"Shut up!"

"I was going to say—"

"Never mind what you were going to say. Shut up!"

"But—but, really, Cherry—"

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"Shut up!" roared Bob Cherry. "If you open your mouth again I'll jolly well put my knuckles into it!"

Billy Bunter blinked at him. Bob was in earnest, and the fat junior thought he had better not speak again at present. He relapsed into silence with an extremely injured expression on his face.

There was a tap at the door, and Hazeldene came in. He had a letter in his hand. He looked rather curiously at the chums of the Remove.

"Hallo! Been having a row?"

Bob Cherry laughed a little uneasily. He was looking red and excited, but he did not wish Hazeldene to know the cause.

"Oh, no; only a little argument with Bunter!" he said. "He wants to talk too much, and I've been giving him some instruction for his own good."

"Oh, really, Cherry——"

"Shut up!" roared Bob.

Hazeldene grinned. Bob glanced at the letter in his hand.

"Any news?"

"Yes; it's from Marjorie."

And the chums of Study No. 1 were all attention at once.

Sent to Coventry!

MARK LINLEY sat in his study.

The light was on and a bright fire glowed in the grate. The study looked very cheerful and cosy, but Mark's face was overcast.

On the table before him were books—Liddell and Scott and the "Initia Græca" and Xenophon's "Anabasis"—at which he had intended to work. But he was not working; he could not concentrate his mind upon it. For him, as for many studious fellows the mere sight of a Greek character had a fascination, but he could not give his thoughts to it now. For once, Mark was thinking only of himself.

His path had been a thorny one ever since he entered Greyfriars. He thought of the old days in the Lancashire village—of the hard work at the mill, and the still harder work of the evenings, when, tired from a day's labour, he had worked hard at his studies.

It had been a strenuous time; a time that had left its mark upon even the sound, healthy Lancashire lad. But it had been for a great object. All was repaid by the pride and delight of his mother when he won Bishop Mowbray's scholarship. Mrs. Linley knew that her boy was going to a great school, and would mix with boys who, never having had to battle with the stern realities of life, would, of course, extend a cordial hand to the lad who had worked his way up from the depths of poverty.

But Mark had not shared her hopes, though he had tried to do so. He had instinctively felt that when he went to Greyfriars he would only be exchanging one scene of struggle for another; that different difficulties waited for him at the great Public school.

But he had been determined to fight his way through them—and so far he had succeeded. His courage had won the esteem of many of his Form-fellows, in spite of themselves. Harry Wharton's friendship had meant much to him, too.

Wharton had recognised him as true blue the first time he met him, and Wharton was the last

fellow in the world to care for the prejudices of others. He had taken Linley up in defiance of the Form, and the Form, as usual, had in the end veered round after their leader.

But all that had been gained was lost again now.

Mark did not understand the cause of the outburst. He was not yet aware of Snoop's treachery. But he knew that the slumbering dislike of the Form had been fully awakened, that passive indifference had changed to open contempt, that even fellows who had liked him had turned against him.

He had left the Common-room with every voice raised to hoot him, and he had gone to his study feeling very dejected. But with grim resolve he took out his books and set to work. But even his resolution was not equal to the test. His mind wandered; he could not concentrate on his task.

He had had unhappy hours enough at Greyfriars, but never had he felt really miserable till now. Now what was he to do? How was he to strive against this new development?

The door opened, and Russell and Lacy came in. They and the Chinese junior, Wun Lung, shared the study with Linley. Mark looked up and nodded, but received only stony stares in reply.

The colour flushed in his face. He had been on good terms enough with his studymates. They were not exactly chums, but they were on a friendly footing. It was the cut direct he received now, and it stung him. He started to his feet.

"Look here, what's the matter with you?" he exclaimed. "What is the matter with the fellows? What are they turning on me like a set of wild beasts for?"

Russell went across to the fireplace without reply; Lacy hesitated and shrugged his shoulders. "You know well enough," he said.

"I don't; unless you mean it's because I'm—what I am—because I'm a working man's son. But I thought you were getting over that."

"It's not that."

"What is it, then?"

"You know jolly well."

"I tell you I don't."

"Don't speak to him, Lacy!" exclaimed Russell. "You know what's been decided on. He's sent to Coventry—he's to be cut by the Form."

"Well, I may as well explain why, if he doesn't know."

"He knows well enough. Snoop heard him sneak to Quelch."

Mark started.

"What's that? Who says I sneaked? And what about?"

"Oh, don't try to make out you're innocent! We know all about it. I admit Bulstrode went too far in the tar-and-feather business. But you had no right to sneak. Of course, a fellow brought up as you've been wouldn't know that," said Russell loftily.

Mark clenched his fists.

"Does Bulstrode think I betrayed him to Mr. Quelch?"

"He jolly well knows you did, and so do we all. You took Quelch to his study, and now he's to be flogged."

"I didn't take Mr. Quelch there; he ordered me to follow him there."

"It amounts to the same thing, I suppose. You gave Bulstrode away."

"I did not. I——"

"Oh, what's the good of lying about it?"

That was the last straw. The Lancashire lad's temper was already at boiling-point. He lashed out with his right, and Russell sat down suddenly on the floor. He was on his feet again in an instant, springing at Linley.

They closed and struggled. Lacy started forward, and then held back. After all, even if the fellow was an outsider, fair play was a jewel. But Russell was no match for the sturdy Lancashire lad, and in a few seconds he was on his back.

Mark stood panting, looking down at him with blazing eyes.

Russell slowly rose.

"That will do," he said quietly. "I dare say I was wrong to call you a liar, but—well, I don't believe you. I don't want to taunt you, Linley, or to blame you at all. I know you've never had chances a decent fellow gets. But don't speak to me again."

"Same here," said Lacy.

Mark gritted his teeth.

"I won't! I don't want to speak to you, or anybody else here! I won't stay in the same study with you, either! I can do my work in the Form-room. Anybody who says I told about Bulstrode is a liar. That's all I have to say."

He picked up his books and strode from the study.

Russell and Lacy looked at one another sheepishly.

"I say, Lacy, it isn't possible that—"

"Rats!" said Lacy. "Of course, he would try to brazen it out."

"I—I suppose so."

"Jolly good riddance, I say, if he keeps his word! We don't want him here."

And Mark Linley did keep his word. That evening he removed his few belongings from the study to his locker in the Form-room, and his old quarters knew him no more.

(Mark Linley is certainly getting a raw deal from his schoolfellows. And as matters are, there's little chance of his innocence being proved. But in next week's grand chapters there's an unexpected development. Order your GEM early.)

LEVISON'S REVENGE!

(Continued from page 27.)

there were no more callers. Strict orders were given to Taggles not to admit any visitors for Mr. Ratcliff, and many disappointed callers were turned away at the gates.

The New House master was left in peace at last.

When he had recovered a little he paid a visit to Mr. Tiper, in Rylcombe, to demand an explanation.

Mr. Tiper was astounded when he saw those advertisements.

It was only too clear that a mischievous hand had been at work. The printing office had been entered and the type changed; that was clear. But who had done the deed?

That was a mystery.

But the discovery was a piece of good luck for the schoolboy editors. For as it was clear that the printing office had been entered on Thursday night and the set-up type tampered with, it was clear also that "Tom Merry's Weekly" had been tampered with on the same occasion.

Even Mr. Ratcliff had to admit it, and the schoolboy editors were therefore exonerated from blame on account of Levison's limerick.

As for Levison, he was not discovered. There was no proof. Mr. Railton had a strong suspicion, but no evidence, and the matter was perforce allowed to drop.

Tom Merry & Co. quite forgave Levison. They felt that they owed him a most enjoyable afternoon. It was long before the St. Jim's fellows ceased to chortle over Mr. Ratcliff's peculiar punishment.

(Next Wednesday: "THEY THOUGHT HE WAS A ROTTER!"—a gripping long yarn in which Gussy, accused of being friendly with a shady character, falls out with his friends. Don't miss reading this great yarn.)

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