

The Schoolboy Band-Conductor! SPARKLING ST. JIM'S
STORY INSIDE.

The **GEM**

**HUNDREDS OF
GRAND PRIZES
OFFERED TO
READERS NEXT
WEEK!**

(See page 5.)





In Town To-day

Introducing
George Alfred Grundy
to the Microphone. By a
B.B.C. TALENT SCOUT.

INTERVIEWER: How do you do, Grundy?

GRUNDY: George Alfred Grundy in full, Mr. Interviewer. Is that the microphone?

INTERVIEWER: Why, yes.

GRUNDY: Tell me, do I have to wear a gas-mask?

INTERVIEWER: A gas-mask? What ever for?

GRUNDY: Only Blake said the best thing I could do when I was broadcasting would be to wear a gas-mask.

INTERVIEWER: If you do, nobody will be able to hear what you say.

GRUNDY: My hat! That was what Blake must have meant. The japing rotter! Look here, don't let's waste time. You need hardly bother to interview me, Mr. Interviewer—I can do all the talking. The listeners don't want to hear you, after all. A turn from the Interviewer would give them a bit of a turn, wouldn't it? And you needn't think I shall have mike fright and dry up. I never dry up.

INTERVIEWER: I feel sure you would find it extremely difficult to—ahem!—dry up, Grundy.

GRUNDY: Thanks, Mr. Interviewer. I don't mean I'm a trained actor, like Sir Lupino Hicks, or Stainless Robey—or whatever their names are—though I may say, all jealousy aside, Tom Merry admits I'm the best actor in the junior dramatic society—

INTERVIEWER: Tom Merry admits that?

GRUNDY: Yes—in his heart of hearts. Not that I'm the sort of chap to spend much time indoors—unless it's boxing. See that fist, Mr. Interviewer?

INTERVIEWER: I cannot very well help seeing it, as you are holding it right under my nose.

GRUNDY: Sorry, Mr. Interviewer! I was only showing you the size. Do you know I once knocked out a champion in the sixth?

INTERVIEWER: You mean to say you actually knocked out the champion boxer in the Sixth Form?

GRUNDY: Ahem! Not exactly. I knocked out the junior champion at my old school—Redclyffe—in the sixth round.

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INTERVIEWER: I understand you left Redclyffe soon after?

GRUNDY: Yes. But that was for a different reason—whopping a prefect.

INTERVIEWER: You—ahem!—whopped a boy much older than yourself, Grundy?

GRUNDY: Two years older, I think. He was a weedy cad, though. I caught him bullying a fag, twisting the kid's ears—so I told him to stop.

INTERVIEWER: And did he?

GRUNDY: No. So I thumped him. The funk simply slumped down like a deflated tyre—and spent the next fortnight in the sanatorium. Shamming, of course. It wouldn't have been so bad if he hadn't been a relative of the Head's. Really, I'd like to insist that I'm quite a peaceable fellow. That's the sort of reputation I want to get at St. Jim's. I'd just hate to shove in where I wasn't wanted.

INTERVIEWER: In that case, Grundy, it is rather extraordinary. There has been a string of telegrams arriving here, urging us to prevent your broadcasting. Here is one of the latest: "ON NO ACCOUNT LET GRUNDY BROADCAST. HIS NAME NOT ON LIST SUBMITTED. RAILTON, HOUSEMASTER."

GRUNDY: Just like Railton. Petty jealousy. I suppose a fellow with talent must expect it—

INTERVIEWER: How did you get into the studio, Grundy?

GRUNDY: Well, if you must know, I simply said I was the captain of the school—and they let me walk right in. And it was no lie, either—you'll see, before I've been very long at St. Jim's I'll be doing Kildare's job, or know the reason why!

INTERVIEWER: Then, Grundy, I am afraid you will shortly learn the reason why. A further telegram has just come. Read it.

GRUNDY (reading) "AM SENDING KILDARE, CAPTAIN OF SCHOOL, TO BRING BACK GRUNDY. RAILTON, HOUSEMASTER." W-w-well, my only hat! And I haven't even begun to tell the listeners about my exploits at footer and cricket—

INTERVIEWER: There will be plenty of time for that, Grundy—when you are actually captain of St. Jim's!

OH, LISTEN TO THE BAND! HERRIES' ORCHESTRA HITS THE HIGH NOTES
—AND THE LOW ONES—IN THIS SPARKLING YARN!

The SCHOOLBOY BAND- CONDUCTOR!



In a moment Herries' orchestra was hurling squibs and crackers at Levison and Mellish. Crack, crack, crack! Whizz! Bang, bang! The tables were turned on the two cads of the School House! Yells of alarm and rage rent the air as they hopped about.

CHAPTER 1. Music Hath Charms!

T A-RA-TA-RA!

"Oh, my hat!" muttered Tom Merry.

Ta-ra-ta-ra!

"Drown it!" exclaimed Monty Lowther, putting his hands to his ears.

Ta-ra-ta-ra-ra-pom!

"Carry me home to die!" moaned Manners.

The Terrible Three were on their way to Study No. 6 in the Fourth Form passage when the unearthly din smote their ears.

They paused outside the door of the study and looked at each other with wry faces.

"It's Herries," said Tom Merry. "He's mad!"

"Mad as a hatter, or a March hare!" said Monty Lowther. "Did you ever hear such a giddy pandemonium? It's like a battleship at target practice!"

"Sort of knocks you sideways, doesn't it?" said Manners.

Blissfully unconscious of the fact that he had three critics

outside the study, the musician continued to blare forth on his cornet.

It was not an unusual thing for George Herries to practise, but seldom did he let himself go to such an extent as this.

The sounds proceeding from that cornet were positively awful, almost sufficient in volume to jar the school to its foundation.

Ta-ra-ta-ra-ra-pom! Ta-ra-ta-ra-ra-pom!

"Ow!" muttered Tom Merry. "If I listen much longer I shall die in the passage. Come on, you fellows! Slaughter the silly idiot!"

With one accord the Terrible Three dashed into the study. Their looks suggested battle, murder, and sudden death.

Herries of the Fourth was seated upon the table, with his precious instrument raised aloft. He had no music in front of him, but was playing just as his fancy took him.

If the din had sounded fierce out in the passage it was fifty times worse inside the study.

The Terrible Three, stopping their ears, charged at Herries all together.

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By

MARTIN CLIFFORD.

George Herries has a hot time of it in building up his band. But he doesn't bargain for being tricked on the evening of his band's first performance!

The next instant the wretched cornet-player appeared to be the centre of a Rugby scrum. Three vigorous bodies smote him from different directions, and he rolled off the table and descended to the floor with a bump which shook every bone in his body. The cornet fell from his grasp and went clattering into the corner.

"Yaroooh! Oh, you frabjous dummies!"

Herries sat up, felt himself all over to make sure that he was still in one piece, and then regarded the Terrible Three with the glare of a basilisk.

"What in thunder did you do that for?" he demanded.

"To put a stopper to your merry antics, my son," said Monty Lowther. "The row you were making was enough to set the dead leaping out of their graves! And, talking about graves, I think it's high time we buried that confounded cornet!"

"Don't you dare——" began Herries wrathfully.

At this juncture, just as things were warming up, the study door opened, and its rightful occupants, Jack Blake, Digby, and Arthur Augustus D'Arcy came in.

The Terrible Three promptly lined up, shoulder to shoulder, thinking they would be called upon to defend themselves; but, to their surprise, the newcomers showed no signs of antagonism—not towards them, at any rate. They were glaring at the prostrate Herries.

"Herries, you prize idiot!" began Digby.

"Herries, you burgling jabberwock!" spluttered Blake.

"Hewwies, you fwightful chump!" chimed in Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

The recipient of these doubtful compliments leapt to his feet.

"Look here," he roared, "I've put up with quite enough from these Shell bounders, without you chaps chipping in!"

Jack Blake stepped forward and flourished a newspaper in his studymate's face.

Blake's own face was very red, and his expression decidedly wrathful.

"What do you mean by this, you—you imbecile?" he roared.

"Mean by what?"

"This apology for an advertisement. I never saw such tommy-rot in my life!"

"Hallo!" said Monty Lowther. "What's our mad musician been up to now?"

Jack Blake handed the paper to the Terrible Three. It was the latest edition of the local "rag," the "Rylcombe Gazette," and Blake had blueheaded the following advertisement, which appeared under the heading of "Professional":

"NOTICE.—A young gentleman, who is a talented musician, is desirous of forming an orchestra, with a view to giving concerts, etc., in aid of charity. Intending members should apply personally on Wednesday afternoon to G. Herries, Study No. 6, Fourth Form Passage, St. James' School, Rylcombe."

"Well, I'm jiggered!" gasped Monty Lowther, after reading this extraordinary announcement. "This must be a jape of some sort. Herries didn't put it in."

"Yes, I did," said Herries.

"What?"

"I had that advertisement inserted, and I'm not ashamed to own it!" said Herries doggedly.

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"But, my dear fellow, you must be stark, staring mad!" gasped Tom Merry. "What the merry dickens do you know about music?"

"Everything!" answered Herries coolly.

"Rats!" said Monty Lowther. "The only thing you seem capable of in the music line is blowing your own trumpet!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"The whole thing seems absurd!" said Tom Merry crossly. "Fancy, a freak like you thinking you can run an orchestra! And you've set aside Wednesday afternoon, of all days, for interviewing applicants. Have you forgotten that there's a House match on Wednesday, and that we've got to wipe up the ground with Figgins & Co.?"

"Blow the House match! And blow Figgins & Co.!"

"It's too late to cancel the advertisement, too!" growled Digby. "Herries will have to go through with the bizney. But we can give him a jolly good bumping, and he'll learn not to put a House match behind his first-rate orchestra in future!"

"Hands off!" roared Herries.

But he was in a woeful minority. His studymates and the Terrible Three whisked him off his feet and sent him crashing to the floor.

Bump!

"Yow-ow-ow!"

"And another!" panted Jack Blake.

Bump!

"Yaroooh! Chuck it, you beasts!"

"One for luck!" chuckled Monty Lowther.

Bump!

For the third and last time Herries descended on the study carpet, where he lay gasping like a newly landed fish.

"I s'pose the next thing the barmy idiot will want is to hold rehearsals in this study!" growled Digby.

Jack Blake gave a roar like an angry bull.

"Just let him try it on!" he said. "There'll be a few pieces of a dead cornet-player waiting to be swept up!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Keep your hair on!" panted Herries, who was just beginning to recover his breath.

"Blessed if I want to hold rehearsals among a crowd of duffers who don't know a crotchet from a treble clef! I shall do the thing in style; and the orchestra, when it's formed, will meet at the Public Hall in Rylcombe. I shall hire it for three nights a week."

"Rats!" said Tom Merry. "But you won't. The whole thing's going to be a howling farce."

To which cheerful prediction Herries replied with the well-worn utterance:

"Wait and see!"

CHAPTER 2.

An Unwelcome Visitor!

HERRIES had expected a good response to his advertisement in the local paper, and he was not disappointed.

Indeed, the response proved altogether too good for his liking.

After dinner on Wednesday, Tom Merry & Co. got into football garb, ready to play the mighty men of the New House. A deputy was found to fill the place of Herries in the School House team, and his absence would not be sorely felt.

The School House won the toss, and Tom Merry kicked off. But the game had not been in

progress long, when a strange figure was sighted coming towards the ground.

"Wha—what—" began Tom Merry, in astonishment.

The queer creature who was approaching was evidently a lady, though she took strides which were remarkably masculine. Her costume was very impressive and tight-fitting, and she wore a pair of pince-nez on the top of her long, aquiline nose. In her hand she carried an umbrella.

"Wonder what she wants?" said Monty Lowther.

"She's making tracks for us," said Manners. "I can't help feeling rather uncomfortable!"

"Rats! She can't eat us!" growled Tom Merry.

"She's going up to Gussy," said Talbot, with a chuckle. "That's all right. Gussy knows how to deal with the fair sex!"

"Fair!" gasped Monty Lowther. "Why, she's as ugly as—as a squashed milk-pudding."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Arthur Augustus was standing near the touch-line. He was wondering why the game had

book was published locally, it cannot be up to the scratch!"

But although the book might not have been up to the scratch, its compiler was. She shot out a somewhat skinny hand, and her clawlike fingers clutched Arthur Augustus by the ear.

"My only Aunt Semphronia!" murmured Monty Lowther. "Gussy's in for it now!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

But Arthur Augustus was not proof against this hostile attack from a member of the fair sex. He tore himself away from the incensed lady and fled, Mrs. Tyle-Loose giving chase with her umbrella.

The football match was temporarily held up while the players roared with laughter.

Luckily, Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was an athlete, while Mrs. Tyle-Loose did not shine in this direction. Consequently, Gussy got well away from her in next to no time, and thus escaped the vials of her wrath.

"Bai Jove! What a beastly, howwid person, begad!" he panted, as he sought refuge in the gymnasium.

Meanwhile, Mrs. Tyle-Loose recovered her

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stopped, not having seen the approach of the intruder.

"Little boy!"

Arthur Augustus gave a jump.

"Bai Jove!" he murmured.

"Little boy!" repeated the strange lady.

The swell of St. Jim's tilted his chin in the air.

"Pardon me, madam—"

The lady with the aquiline nose struck her umbrella impatiently on the ground.

"Why did you not speak when I first addressed you?" she demanded, in a voice which Monty Lowther, under his breath, likened to the sound of a nutmeg-grater.

Arthur Augustus affixed his celebrated monocle to his eye, with an air of great deliberation.

"I am not accustomed," he said, his face crimson, "to bein' addressed as 'little boy'!"

"Pah! A mere infant!" sniffed the lady. "I am Mrs. Tyle-Loose, authoress. You have doubtless heard of my book, 'Fragrant Moments in My Garden' which was published locally."

Arthur Augustus shook his head.

"I don't wead such tommy-wot!"

Mrs. Tyle-Loose pranced about like a cat on hot bricks. Her umbrella was flourished in dangerous proximity to the swell of St. Jim's. But Gussy was almost as heated as the authoress, and he stood his ground.

"You dare"—Mrs. Tyle-Loose was almost beside herself—"you dare to characterise my writings as tommy—tommy—"

"Tommy-wot!" said Arthur Augustus. "Most emphatically, madam! If, as you remark, your

breath, and made her way back to the ground. She regarded Tom Merry & Co. with haughty disfavour.

"Can any of you children inform me where I shall find Mr. Herries?" she asked.

"Ch-ch-children! Mum-mum-Mr. Herries!" stuttered Tom Merry.

"Answer me, boy! You are not a parrot, I presume?"

Before Tom Merry could reply Monty Lowther obligingly came forward.

"Follow me, ma'am," he said, with great courtesy. "I shall be happy to take you to Mr. Herries!"

Mrs. Tyle-Loose sniffed, but condescended to let Monty Lowther lead the way.

The humorist of the Shell had no intention of taking the objectionable visitor to Study No. 6. That wasn't good enough. It would create more fun if he left Mrs. Tyle-Loose with the Head.

"This way, ma'am!" said Monty briskly.

He guided the authoress through a maze of corridors, and indicated the Head's study.

Without even saying "Thank you!" Mrs. Tyle-Loose swept on, with rustling skirt, and entered the sacred apartment.

Dr. Holmes, who had been enjoying an afternoon pipe, and was just filling another, gazed at the strange creature who had invaded his study as if she were Hamlet's ghost.

"M-my dear madam!" he managed to stammer.

"To whom do I owe this pleasure?"

"Enough formality, sir!" snapped Mrs. Tyle-

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Loose. "You are forming an orchestra, I understand?"

"I—I—"

"And I have come to offer my services, seeing that the proceeds of the performances will be devoted to charity. I am a strenuous worker, and I pride myself that I should make a big hit in your orchestra. I can play the violoncello divinely!"

"But, my dear madam—"

Dr. Holmes sat back in his chair, nearly overcome. He could not for the life of him understand what his extraordinary visitor was driving at, and concluded that she must be suffering from some sort of insanity.

"When shall you wish me to attend rehearsals?" asked Mrs. Tyle-Loose.

"R-r-rehearsals!" stuttered the Head.

"Yes, yes. Are you hard of hearing, sir, or are you a parrot, that you should mimic me in that ridiculous manner?"

The Head bristled up at this. He could stand a good deal, but human endurance has its limits.

"I do not think you are aware, madam," he said stiffly, "to whom you are speaking. I am Dr. Holmes, the headmaster of this school."

"What!"

"I shall be glad to know who you are, and what your object is in claiming an audience with me?"

"But—but I understood you to be Mr. Herries!"

"Herries? Good heavens! He is a member of the Fourth Form here—a mere boy! How came you to labour under this delusion, Mrs.—"

"Tyle-Loose!" said the owner of that name. "One of your boys, when I asked him if I could see Mr. Herries, directed me here. Do you mean to say that the person I am visiting is only a boy?"

"That is so!"

Mrs. Tyle-Loose gripped her umbrella grimly. "Then I must conclude that the whole affair is a practical joke?" she said.

"Which affair, madam? I am quite in the dark."

The Head's visitor produced a copy of the local paper, and flourished it under his nose.

"Do you see that advertisement?" she demanded.

Dr. Holmes ran his eye over the announcement which Herries had inserted.

"Bless my soul!" he murmured, when he perused it. "I must say it is very presumptuous on Herries' part to imagine he can take upon himself the formation of an orchestra. However, his motives are commendable, and I shall not interfere. You have been the victim of a practical joke, Mrs.—er—Tyle-Loose. You will find Herries in Study No. 6, in the Fourth Form passage."

"I am a stranger here. Cannot you use a gentleman's privilege of directing me?" asked the authoress reproachfully.

"I have other and more pressing matters to attend to," said the Head tartly. "Good-afternoon, madam!"

Mrs. Tyle-Loose flounced out of the room, and the Head, sinking back, mopped his heated brow with his handkerchief.

"Dear me!" he murmured. "What a—a vixenish person! I am more relieved than I can say to know she is gone, and only hope there will be no trouble in another quarter!"

But the Head's hopes were not destined to be fulfilled.

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CHAPTER 3.

Hot for Herries!

"MY child!"

Skimpole of the Shell, who was leaning up against one of the old elms in the quad, reading the outpourings of Professor Balmcyrumpet, looked up with a start, and blinked through his big glasses at the person who had dared to address him in such a high-and-mighty manner.

"Direct me at once to Master Herries."

Skimpole was a very meek and mild youth, and at all times ready to oblige. So, instead of taking Mrs. Tyle-Loose to task for having called him a child, when he was really—in his own esteem—one of the giants of the intellectual world, he humoured her.

"With pleasure, madam!" he murmured. "Follow me."

"And no jokes, mind!" said Mrs. Tyle-Loose severely. "Do not dare to mislead me, or—"

The speaker made a threatening movement with her umbrella, and Skimpole shuddered.

The walking dictionary of the Shell, as Monty Lowther called him, led his charge to Study No. 6.

"You will find Herries within, madam," he said.

"Ah!"

Flinging open the door, Mrs. Tyle-Loose rushed in like a whirlwind, causing Herries, who was trying to tackle "Tannhauser" upon his cornet, to bowl over the music-stand in his alarm.

"Boy!" said Mrs. Tyle-Loose vindictively. "Ill-bred puppy! Presumptuous idiot—"

"Wh-what!" gasped Herries.

"It is you, I take it, who had the audacious effrontery to advertise for an orchestra—you, an infant of immature years—and with as much knowledge of music as a cat has of needlework!"

"I—I—" stammered Herries, the wind taken completely out of his sails by this most sudden and unexpected attack.

"Deny it if you dare!" snapped Mrs. Tyle-Loose. "Here is the advertisement in black and white! You ought to be ashamed of yourself for pretending you were a musician!"

Herries squared his shoulders at this.

"Look here!" he said, losing his temper. "I don't know who you are, or what you're doing outside an asylum; but I don't allow anybody to say I'm a rotten musician when I can play the cornet as well as anybody in the country!"

"You—you—" Mrs. Tyle-Loose seemed on the verge of an apoplectic fit. "Do you know, child, to whom you are speaking?"

"Yes!" growled Herries, with delightful candour. "To an ill-mannered hussy!"

That did it, of course. Neither things past, nor things present, nor things to come, nor principalities, nor powers could have stopped Mrs. Tyle-Loose from opening the attack at that moment.

Raising her umbrella aloft, she rushed at the intrepid youth who had dared to be so cheeky to her.

"M-m-my hat!" muttered Herries in alarm.

He deftly got behind the table, and dodged about on the other side to escape the fast and furious blows which Mrs. Tyle-Loose rained upon him.

How he escaped injury was almost miraculous, for the incensed lady was wound up, and her blows did not err on the side of mercy.

"Help!" roared Herries. "I'm not a coward, but I'm blessed if I can stand this!"

Whack!
The umbrella descended with stinging force upon his shoulder.
"Yarooooooh!"

Roused by his master's cry, Towser, the faithful bulldog, who had been curled up before the fireplace, rose, stretched himself, and barked furiously at Mrs. Tyle-Loose.

Herries took advantage of the diversion to scramble out of the window. With a cry of relief, he dropped to the ground below.

But the next moment he had the shock of his

the cinema! Laurel and Hardy will have to play second fiddle to Mrs. What's-her-name after this!"
"See how they run!" chuckled Monty Lowther.
"Look at old Herries! You can't see his heels for dust!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The affair was a screaming joke to all except the unfortunate Herries, who was almost at the end of his tether. He dashed up to Lefevre of the Fifth, who was watching the game.

"Keep her off!" he gasped.

"No, thanks!" laughed Lefevre. "I don't argue with women!"



As Mrs. Tyle-Loose leaped through the window after the fleeing Herries, there was an ominous rending sound, and a portion of her skirt was left behind in the jaws of Towser!

life, for Mrs. Tyle-Loose was following him; and to judge by her screams of abject terror, Towser was following her.

There was an ominous rending sound, as a portion of the victim's skirt came away from the rest, gripped triumphantly in the jaws of Towser; and then Mrs. Tyle-Loose, still gripping her umbrella, came whirling down.

Fortunately, the drop from the study window was not considerable, or an ambulance might have been needed. As it was, Mrs. Tyle-Loose alighted upon her rather large feet, and immediately rushed after Herries.

The junior, scared almost out of his wits, sped away towards the football field.

The House match had been resumed, but it was held up again instantly as Herries and his pursuer came tearing across the turf.

"Oh, my hat!" muttered Figgins. "This beats

"She's not a woman! She's a fiend!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The wretched Herries lifted up the folds of Lefevre's raincoat, which was a very roomy one, and sought refuge beneath it.

But Mrs. Tyle-Loose was not to be balked of her prey. Speeding to the spot, she brought her umbrella down with terrific force.

"Yow-ow-ow!" came in a smothered roar from the helpless Herries.

"Yaroooop!" yelled Lefevre, as one of the blows, missing Herries, caught him on the leg.
"Help! Get away, you old wretch!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The players held their sides in helpless merriment. Pantomimes were "also ran" by comparison with this wildly exciting scene.

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CHAPTER 4.

The Uninvited Guests!

"SCHOOL HOUSE for ever!"

"Hurrah!"

"Well played, Tom Merry!"

The captain the Shell had scored the winning goal for his side, and the House match was over.

Figgins & Co. had been defeated, after an exciting game, by four goals to three.

In high good humour the School House footballers trooped away from the scene of their triumph.

"Who says tea?" asked Tom Merry.

"Tea!" responded Manners and Lowther in one breath.

"We're doing things in style this afternoon," said Tom, "so Talbot and Jack Blake can come along if they like."

"What-ho!" ejaculated the two fellows referred to.

Tom Merry had received a remittance that morning from his devoted nurse, Miss Priscilla Fawcett. That well-meaning spinster was some what of a bore when she came to St. Jim's, and the persistency with which she still regarded Tom Merry rather in the light of an infant in long clothes caused many a blush to mount to the cheeks of the captain of the Shell.

Miss Fawcett was one of those people to whom distance lent enchantment; but her remittances, when they came, were as welcome as the flowers in May.

"I gave a quidlet to young Joe Frayne," said Tom, "and told him to lay in a first-rate stock of provender from Dame Taggles. There'll be enough and to spare for five. Blessed if I'm not hungry, too, after wiping up the ground with those New House bounders!"

"Same here!" said Monty Lowther. "I could eat a donkey's hind leg off! Did you ask young Frayne to lay the table?"

Tom Merry nodded.

"I promised him a bag of currant buns if he set everything shipshape!"

"Good egg!"

But the five juniors had the shock of their lives when they reached the study.

Talbot pushed open the door, uttered a queer sort of gasp, and staggered back into the passage.

"What in thunder's the matter?" asked Tom Merry.

Talbot nearly choked.

"It—it's like a blessed tap-room!" he said.

"What do you mean?"

"Go in and see for yourself!"

Greatly wondering, Tom Merry obeyed, and Manners, Monty Lowther, and Jack Blake followed close on his heels.

The study had, indeed, undergone a startling transformation. It was occupied by four or five persons, none of whom the juniors ever remembered having seen before.

"Who—what—" gasped Tom Merry, stopping short in amazement.

"Pardon me," said a stout gentleman with a florid face and a big moustache, "but are you Master Herries?"

"No, I'm not!" said Tom Merry warmly. "And I'd jolly well like to know what you're doing in my study, you—you—"

"Boy, don't you know who I am?"

"No, and I don't want to!"

"I am Mr. Boozey-Smith, doctor of music!"

"The first part of his name suits him well,"

Whack, whack, whack, whack!

Mrs. Tyle-Loose was certainly going strong—a good deal too strong for Herries, who, the more he struggled to break away, became more hopelessly entangled in the folds of Lefevre's coat.

His yells were rather like those of a boy of ten being thrown into the deep end of a bath for the first time.

The avenger did not desist until lack of breath and the sudden snapping in two of her umbrella compelled her to do so. Then she drew back, flushed and furious.

"There!" she panted, as the bruised and battered Herries crawled out of his futile shelter. "Perhaps you will refrain from playing practical jokes in future! The chastisement I have just administered will do you good, my child!"

"Ow-ow-ow!"

"I go!" said Mrs. Tyle-Loose. "And I hope never to set foot in this—this hotbed of iniquity again!"

Herries hoped so, too, as he watched the indignant authoress, with the broken umbrella still clutched tightly in her hand, take her departure.

The musician of the Fourth was beginning to wonder if he had been altogether wise in advertising for an orchestra.

Amid the hysterical laughter of the footballers he limped slowly back to Study No. 6, hoping and praying that Mrs. Tyle-Loose would be his last visitor that day.

But when troubles come they come, not in single spies, but in battalions, as the bard of Avon so truly remarked; and George Herries had not yet paid the full penalty of his enthusiasm.

Harry Wharton & Co. in Texas!

For some mysterious reason

Two-gun Sanders, who has

"shot up" as many guys as he has

fingers and toes, is determined to

stop Vernon-Smith reaching Kicking

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murmured Monty Lowther, sotto voce. "He seems three-parts squiffy already!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Jack Blake and Manners, while Talbot discreetly got out into the passage.

"It isn't a laughing matter," said Tom angrily. "These—these villains have gone and wolfed our grub! Who invited them here?"

Mr. Boozey-Smith, who was leaning back in his chair, with his feet on the tablecloth, and a fat cigar between his teeth, supplied the necessary information.

"A sallow-faced youth directed us here," he said. "He told us to make ourselves at home and pitch into the tea, and that Master Herries would arrive in due course."

"Yes, that's correct," said another of the party, a meek-looking man, who might have been a curate or an undertaker.

"Sounds like Levison," said Jack Blake. "That's just the sort of rotten trick he revels in! My hat! We'll make him sit up for it later on!"

"Is Master Herries here?" asked Mr. Boozey-Smith, placing his lighted cigar negligently on the new cloth, in which it began to burn a conspicuous hole.

"No, he isn't!" said Manners. "You've been brought to the wrong shop."

"That is most annoying!"

"Better go and bring Herries along," said Tom Merry. "He can cope with this precious set of beauties! They've come about that confounded orchestra, I suppose!"

"But what about our feed?" protested Jack Blake.

"The only feed we shall get is stale bread-and-butter in Hall!"

"Groooh!"

Manners proceeded to Study No. 6, where Herries was seated at tea with Digby and D'Arcy.

"Come in, deah boy!" said Arthur Augustus cordially. "Sowwy we haven't any gwub to offah you, beyond a few stale sardines!"

"Blow your sardines!" growled Manners.

"Herries, you're wanted!"

Herries turned pale.

"Don't," he said—"don't say that horrid old cat from Wayland has come back again!"

"You'll find several specimens worse than her in our study," said Manners. "They've been making themselves at home, wolfing our tea and slinging cigar-ash all over the show. They want to see you!"

"About joining my orchestra?"

"I suppose so. My hat! You've got a lot to answer for, I can tell you!"

"Oh, I don't mind if they're men!" said Herries airily. "I can hold my own against any man, even if he's got the strength of Samson and the snarl of a wild beast. It's those snappy sort of women that I can't stand!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Herries rose to his feet, and accompanied Manners to the Terrible Three's study.

Mr. Boozey-Smith still had his feet on the table, and the rank, odour of his cigar permeated the study.

"Master Herries?" he asked, as the Fourth Former entered.

Herries nodded, and turned to the juniors who were congregated in the doorway.

"Run away and play, you fellows!" he said. "I want to have a private jaw with this gentleman!"

"You're welcome!" growled Tom Merry. "Blessed if they're the sort of people I'd care to associate with!"

And Tom and his comrades, their tempers rather on edge by reason of the fact that their feed had been wolfed, tramped off to the Hall, to refresh themselves as best they could with bread-and-butter and weak tea.

Herries closed the door, and looked round for a seat. Failing to find one, he stood and surveyed the assembly.

Besides the half-sober Mr. Smith and the clerical-looking gentleman, there were a couple of stolid rustics from Rylcombe, and a man of pugilistic appearance, who imbibed something from a suspicious-looking bottle, which he passed on in due course to Mr. Boozey-Smith.

"So you're the cove advertising for a nor-kester—wot?" said the pugilistic gentleman.

"I am," said Herries.

"Wotcher going to pay us?"

Herries flushed.

"Oh, really!" he said. "Of course, I shall expect you to give your services gratis, as it is in a good cause!"

"Gratis, my grandmother! Do you think



"Your turn now, Joe!"

Half-a-crown has been awarded to E. Robertson, 161, Beechwood Avenue, Earlsdon, Coventry.

we're goin' to give yer the benefit of our vallyble time and talents for nothin'? If so, then I may say as 'ow you're quite wrong!"

"Ear, 'ear!" said Mr. Boozey-Smith rather thickly. "That's what I always say! Never work without no pay! Come, Master Herries, make it half-a-crown a rehearsal and a guinea at every public performance."

"Rats!"

"Eh? What's that?" Mr. Boozey-Smith rose unsteadily to his feet, jerking off the tablecloth and its contents as he did so. "Jest you moderate your language, my boy, or there'll be trouble!"

"If it's a straight left as you're wantin', or a 'arf-arm jolt, it's Jim Betts as can oblige yer!" said the pugilistic giant.

Herries shivered a little. When he had advertised for an orchestra, he had expected to receive applications from refined and genteel musicians, and not from dissolute village roughs, who threatened him with all sorts of pains and penalties if he didn't humour them.

But he stood his ground.

"Look here," he said, "it's like your confounded cheek to come and take possession of this study and wolf the grub which belongs to other fellows! Let me tell you, once and for all, that I want clean-looking and clean-living men

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in my orchestra—not a gang of thoroughbred wasters!”

“Boy!” Mr. Boozey-Smith was almost foaming at the mouth. “Boy, I am a doctor of music, and have gained the distinction of a Sullivan and the fame of a Mozart!”

The speaker waxed very excited and put his foot in the teapot—which had fallen to the floor some moments previously—without noticing the action.

“You can take yourself off, all the lot of you!” said Herries, clenching his hands hard. “You’ve turned this study into a beastly bear-garden, and if the Head came in now and saw you smoking and drinking, he’d come down on me like a thousand of bricks! So you can jolly well scram!”

Whereupon one of the rustics, who had not yet opened his mouth, for the simple reason that it had been distorted with a huge chunk of chewing-gum, gave tongue.

“Teach the young ijt a lesson, Jim!” he said.

“That’s jest wot I be a-goin’ to do, matey!” replied Jim Betts.

He turned upon Herries with a savage light dancing in his eyes. It was evident that he had made too indiscreet an inroad upon the contents of the suspicious-looking bottle.

“Now, then,” he said, “put up your dukes! Put ‘em up, and, by jimmy, I’ll give yer the lickin’ of yer life!”

“Hear, hear! I begs to oppose that proposition!” said Mr. Boozey-Smith, who was becoming a bit mixed in his speech.

Herries realised that the situation was ugly. The attitude of the men was most menacing, and Jim Betts was already rolling up his sleeves.

“Help!” roared Herries, at the top of his lungs. “Rescue, St. Jim’s!”

“I’ll ‘elp and rescue yer, so I will!” said Jim Betts, lurching forward. “Take that!”

Herries easily evaded the clumsy blow; then the door of the study burst open, and Tom Merry & Co., who had made short work of their unsatisfying feed in Hall, rushed to the assistance of the unfortunate Herries.

The scene was an animated one. The applicants for admission to Herries’ orchestra, having found that the advertiser was a mere schoolboy, who didn’t intend to pay them for their services, were simply spoiling for a row, and they had their desire at that moment.

The furniture went flying, the crockery on the floor was shivered to the minutest fractions, and the haze of tobacco smoke which hung about the room lent the scene the appearance of a tavern brawl.

“Sock it into ‘em!” rose Tom Merry’s voice above the uproar.

Biff! Thud! Biff! Thud!

To and fro the combatants surged, and youth and physical fitness soon began to gain the upper hand.

The Terrible Three fastened on to the pugilistic Jim Betts with a terror-like tenacity, and together they dragged him to the floor, where he was promptly sat upon.

Although the strife was fierce, the warfare wasn’t long. Mr. Boozey-Smith seemed to be a trifle out in his perspective, for he was engaged in battering the clock on the mantelpiece, apparently under the delusion that it was the face of a St. Jim’s junior.

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The two country yokels fared very indifferently at the hands of Talbot and Jack Blake, and the meek-looking, servile man was not of the stuff of which heroes are made. He discreetly remained a non-combatant.

“Yaroop!” roared Mr. Boozey-Smith, as he was seized suddenly from the rear and hurled to the floor. “Oh, my stars! This is too much for my liking! I guess—”

What the alleged doctor of music guessed was never made known, for at that moment, just as the juniors had completely got the whip-hand of the precious pack of applicants, the study door was thrown open, and somebody stood on the threshold.

A general gasp of dismay followed.

For the somebody was Mr. Railton, the House-master!

CHAPTER 5.

Getting to Business!

LEVISON of the Fourth had been responsible for Mr. Railton’s sudden and dramatic intrusion.

Levison, never missing an opportunity of bringing about trouble for Tom Merry & Co., had heard the sounds of strife in the Terrible Three’s study, and had drawn Mr. Railton’s attention to it.

“Excuse me, sir,” he said, “but there’s a terrible fight going on in Tom Merry’s study, sir! Listen! The cries and groans are awful!”

Mr. Railton brushed the speaker aside, and hastened towards the scene of the combat.

He had the surprise of his life on seeing what was afoot.

“Boys,” he thundered, “what is the meaning of this—this outrageous conduct? Merry, I demand an explanation at once!”

“These scoundrels, sir”—Tom Merry gave Jim Betts a dig in the ribs as he spoke to keep him quiet—“were making things warm for Herries, and we just managed to chip in at the right moment.”

“But what are they doing on the premises at all?” demanded Mr. Railton sternly. “Why, some of them seem to be under the influence of drink!”

Mr. Boozey-Smith struggled into a sitting posture.

“I—I wash never more shober in my life!” he said huskily. “I—if any man says otherwise, I—I’ll shlaughter him!”

“Be silent, sir!” said the Housemaster; and there was an imperative ring in his voice which even the semi-intoxicated man could not fail to detect. “Who is responsible for the presence of these dissolute scamps in this study?”

“I am, sir,” said Herries.

“Indeed! Then you shall render me an explanation of your conduct later on. Meanwhile, I will have these persons ejected from the school by force!”

At this juncture Jim Betts caught sight of Levison’s face peering in at the doorway.

“It was ‘im,” he said dramatically, “‘im with the long nose an’ beady eyes wot showed us in ‘ere!”

Levison’s face turned almost an art shade in green, and he made a hasty movement to escape. But Mr. Railton was too quick for him. Striding out into the passage, he caught Levison by the collar.

“You also will accompany me to my study in a

LAUGH THESE OFF!

—with Monty
Lowther.



Hallo, Everybody!

An authority suggests that most people object more to the noise of cats than to that of passing trains. At any rate, it's not much use hurling boots at passing trains!

"Now just say, 'Oh, oh, oh, they will kill him,'" said the film director to the film star, an ex-telephone operator. The young actress took a deep breath, and said: "Oh double-oh, they will kill him!"

All right, you tell one. Have I heard about the schoolboy who refused to eat a cream bun? No, and neither have you!

Useful definition: A snob is a social three ha'pence who takes no notice whatever of a penny, but will go to any length to get on speaking terms with twopence.

News: Pwllheli radio listeners complain that the programmes from a near-by station sound like a herd of pigs at the microphone. Possibly somebody trying to pronounce Pwllheli!

"Riding School To Become Cinema." A stable proposition.

few moments!" he said. Then, turning to the defeated gang of villagers, the Housemaster added: "I will now summon some of the senior boys to turn you out!"

The meek-looking man—the only member of the party who had stood clear of fighting—spoke for the first time.

"We'll go quiet, guv'nor. There's no need for force."

"Very well," said Mr. Railton. "I will give you three minutes to get clear of the premises. Get off that man's chest, Merry!"

The captain of the Shell obeyed, and the discomfited aspirants for musical honours were quick to avail themselves of the opportunity to get away.

Mr. Boozey-Smith tottered about uncertainly, being utterly incapable of walking, and it became necessary for the two country yokels to carry him off between them.

"Bye-bye!" he called back, with a flourish of his hand. "See you Saturday, Susie!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Silence!" roared Mr. Railton. "Herries and Levison, come with me!"

The juniors addressed obeyed. The hearts of both of them were somewhat within the region of their boots.

Story: "The judge sent me here for the rest of my life," said one convict. "Got any complaints?" asked his companion. "Do you call breaking rocks with a hammer a rest?" growled the first convict.

I hear there was a bit of a stir when a minor Government official disappeared recently. Anxiety was first felt when it was found that his office had not been slept in. Snor-r-re!

Prisoner at the Wayland Assizes was being cross-examined. "Where do you live?" demanded the judge. "With my father." "Where does he live?" "With my brother." "Where does he live?" "Oh, he's moved from there now!" explained the prisoner earnestly.

Echo of last vac: "Just look at this report!" exclaimed Lord Eastwood to his youngest son, Wally D'Arcy. "Mr. Selby states that you are careless and slapdash to the point of sheer laziness!" "Yes, that's pretty serious, pater," agreed Wally, shaking his head. "Do you know, I think we've almost grounds for a libel action!"

The crow is a native of Britain, states Mr. Linton. British to the core.

A West End hotel has installed wireless in its kitchens. So they set the jellies to music now!

A reader tells me he nearly laughed his head off over this column the other day. At all events, try to keep your hair on, old chap!

"Tom Merry says I can't act," snorted Grundy at rehearsal. "Notices everything, doesn't he?" agreed Blake, sympathetically.

Curtain—till next Wed.!

The Housemaster entered his study, and faced round upon the delinquents with his back to the mantelpiece. Through the open window he had the last fleeting glimpse of the departing musicians. Mr. Boozey-Smith was engaged in throwing kisses to Taggles, the porter.

"Now, Herries," said Mr. Railton, "you say that those persons came here to see you?"

"Yes, sir."

"For what purpose?"

"I am forming an orchestra, sir, to give performances on behalf of Wayland Hospital."

Mr. Railton's brow cleared somewhat.

"Of course, when I advertised for applicants to come here on Wednesday afternoon, I didn't expect a rotten crew like that, sir," said Herries. "Most musicians are decent enough fellows, and you could have knocked me down with a feather when I saw that beastly gang. We were just going to—ahem!—pitch 'em out on their necks when you came along, sir."

The Housemaster nodded, and turned to Levison, whose knees were almost knocking together.

"What was your object in showing the men into Merry's study, Levison?"

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CHAPTER 6.

Going Great Guns!

THE next morning the post brought Herries the following extraordinary epistle:

Riverside House, Rylcombe.

"Dear Master Herries,—I wish to tender my profuse apologies for the deplorable state in which I appeared before you yesterday.

"All men of genius have their lapses from the path of virtue, and I unfortunately fell under the influence of that beetle-browed blackguard, Jim Betts. He insisted that on the way to St. Jim's a stimulant would be necessary, with the result that I arrived in the deplorable state aforementioned.

"I am afraid that in my state of inebriety I said many things of which I am now ashamed, among them being that I would not join your orchestra without payment. I readily take that back, and shall be most happy to give you my services gratis, providing you will forgive me for my lamentable behaviour yesterday. Believe me, yours very faithfully,

"C. BOOZEY-SMITH, Mus.Doc."

The heart of Herries, never hard, melted on reading this letter.

"I'll take him on," reflected Herries. "After all, he's a doctor of music, and those sort of people aren't as plentiful as blackberries in this part of the world."

Then the thought occurred to him that perhaps Mr. Boozey-Smith was only romancing when he described himself as a doctor of music. On reference to the local telephone directory, however, Herries saw that the statement was correct.

He at once replied to Mr. Boozey-Smith as follows:

"Dear Sir,—I freely forgive the rotten exhibition you made of yourself yesterday, and I shall be pleased for you to join my orchestra. I haven't got all the members yet, but I hope to engage them to-day.

"The first rehearsal will take place in the public hall at Rylcombe, Friday evening, at seven. Please be there. Yours sincerely,

"GEORGE HERRIES."

Tom Merry clapped Herries on the shoulder as the fellows streamed out of afternoon school.

"Chucked up the orchestra bizney?" he asked.

"Not a bit of it!" said Herries. "I had a beastly day yesterday, I admit, but it's going to take a jolly sight more than that to drive the wind out of my sails."

Tom Merry glanced admiringly at the Fourth Former.

"Well played!" he said. "I'm hanged if you don't deserve to make a howling success of the wheeze!"

"I shall!" said Herries confidently. "Can I borrow your bike to run into Wayland? Mine's punctured."

"Certainly."

Herries dashed off to the bicycle-shed in high spirits. He had great hopes of getting his orchestra complete that afternoon.

He rode at a leisurely pace into Wayland, and, after refreshing himself with ginger-beer and cake, made tracks for the little music shop in the High Street.

Mr. Palmer, the proprietor, was a dapper little man, with a face as long as the fiddle which hung

"I—I thought they'd be comfortable there, sir!"

"I think I know better than that, Levison! You took them there so that they might cause a disturbance, and possibly wreck the study. I have long been aware, Levison, that there is no friendship lost between you and Merry. You will hold out your hand!"

"What for, sir?"

"Do not assume that attitude of injured innocence!" thundered Mr. Railton.

Reluctantly Levison put out his hand.

Swish!

"Ow!"

Swish, swish!

"Yow-ow-ow!"

"Now the other!" said Mr. Railton grimly.

Swish, swish, swish!

"Yarooooop!"

"I trust that will teach you a lesson, Levison! You may go!"

And the cad of the Fourth, squeezing his hands under his armpits, quitted the study. He seemed to be trying to fold himself up like a penknife.

"Hang it!" he muttered. "Hang Herries and his orchestra! I'll see that he has it taken out of him for this!"

Meanwhile, George Herries was awaiting the fate which had befallen Levison.

But, to his surprise, Mr. Railton put the cane away, and turned to him, without a trace of anger.

"I can clearly see that you were not to blame for what took place this afternoon, Herries," he said. "It was, perhaps, a little thoughtless to advertise for people to come here and see you."

Herries brightened up.

"You mean that I may go ahead with my orchestra?" he said.

"Certainly, my boy! I see no objection. But do not invite applicants to come to the school. It is only courting trouble."

"Quite so, sir. I'll go into Wayland to-morrow and have a look round. Thanks awfully, sir!"

"You may go!"

Herries left the Housemaster's study with a light heart. Fortunately, Mr. Railton was a sportsman, and understood boys.

The first genuine recruit for his orchestra came along much sooner than Herries anticipated. In the corridor he was buttonholed by Dick Brooke, the day-boy.

"Hallo!" said Brooke. "I hear you're forming an orchestra that's going to take the world by storm."

"That's so," said Herries.

"Well, I shouldn't say no if you asked me to join," said Brooke. "I'm a pretty good hand at the violin."

"Good man!" said Herries cordially. "That's ripping!"

Herries was aware that in Dick Brooke he had found a very useful partner. Dick Brooke was a musician to the finger-tips. Only a few weeks before he had collaborated with Miss Sylvia Carr, one of his girl-chums in the neighbourhood, in the composition of a stirring melody. It had proved immensely popular, and his schoolfellows had recognised in Dick Brooke, for the first time, the qualities of a skilled musician.

"You shall be first violin," said Herries.

"Thanks!" said Brooke. "Let's hope the orchestra will be a stunning success right from the word go!"

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When Tom Merry & Co. entered their study they had the shock of their lives. The room, thick with smoke, was occupied by four or five rough-looking men, and they had eaten the juniors' tea! "Who—what—" gasped Tom Merry, stopping short in amazement.

over his counter. He was singing "Maid of Athens" in a most mournful tone when Herries entered.

"Good-afternoon, Mr. Palmer," said the junior.

"Afternoon, sir! What can I oblige you with to-day? Something classical, or do you require dance music? I can let you have all the popular pieces, from Mendelssohn's 'Wedding March' to 'Nice Work If You Can Get It.'"

"Nothing doing!" said Herries, shaking his head. "I'm forming an orchestra, Mr. Palmer, to give performances for Wayland Hospital, and I thought you might be able to put me on to some people who'd join."

The music seller stroked his chin sadly.

"Wayland isn't musical—more's the pity!" he said. "The folk in this town likes to eat, drink, and be merry; but their merriment doesn't take the form of music, worse luck, or I should be doing a roaring trade. As it is, it's as much as I can do to get my bread-and-butter."

Herries said he was sorry to hear things were so bad, and with a short nod, strolled out of the shop.

"I'd better ride into Rylcombe," he mused, "and see if I can get hold of somebody there."

As he free-wheeled down the hill going out of Wayland, a sudden commotion arose in front of him.

A pony and trap came careering out of a private drive into the roadway, and in the trap was a girl of about twelve years of age. By her excited cries Herries could tell that the pony had bolted.

But it was no time for reflecting on the why and wherefore of the situation.

Herries fell, rather than jumped, off his machine, and, letting it run into the hedge, took

a straight, swift leap at the animal's head, and succeeded in getting a tight grip on the reins.

Herries had never stopped a runaway horse before, and the task wasn't as simple as writers of fiction had led him to believe.

The pony continued his wayward course for at least another twenty yards, and if Herries had not hung on like grim death a catastrophe would certainly have occurred.

When the frightened creature at length came to a halt, foaming but conquered, Herries turned to the girl.

"All right?" he said.

"Ye-es," she faltered. "I—I was so frightened!"

At that moment a red-faced, agitated-looking gentleman came out of the drive and puffed his way to the spot. He wore a clerical collar, and Herries recognised him as being Mr. Wardle, the rector of Wayland.

"My dear boy," panted the clergyman, "how ever can I thank you for your timely assistance? You have saved my little niece!"

The girl got down from the trap, and, although she did not speak—probably the shock of the situation had proved too much for her—she darted a look at Herries which expressed her gratitude more than the most eloquent words would have done.

"That horse is a terror, sir," said Herries. "He came out of the drive like a giddy whirlwind."

The rector nodded.

"Something must have scared him. He's always been a docile animal. He belongs to my gardener, and I shall warn him about leaving the horse untethered. He seems to have calmed down now."

"Then I will lead him back, sir," said Herries.

"But your bicycle!" said Mr. Wardle, noting

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for the first time that the machine, which had careered into the hedge, was damaged in more places than one. "I cannot allow you to suffer any personal loss in respect of your great gallantry! What is your name?"

"Herries, sir."

"Well, Herries, permit me to pay the cost of repairing that machine."

Herries grinned.

"It's not mine," he said. "It belongs to Tom Merry; but I'll make it all right with him."

Mr. Wardle, however, was persistent.

"Come!" he said. "You have rendered me a great service, and I shall not feel happy unless I can in some small measure repay it."

Then a sudden thought struck Herries. He remembered the object of his mission into Wayland—how he was bent on getting recruits for his orchestra—and it occurred to him that perhaps the rector, who was of a musical turn of mind, might consent to join.

Without hesitation, therefore, Herries popped the question.

"Why, my dear boy, I shall be delighted," beamed Mr. Wardle, "especially as the performances are going to be held for such a highly deserving cause. I can play the violin very creditably, as my niece will readily testify."

The girl laughed. The colour had returned to her cheeks, and she walked by Herries' side as he led the refractory pony back to the stable.

"I've been to Wayland to try and bag some recruits," said Herries, "but I drew blank."

"What!" said the rector. "Why, I am acquainted with several talented musicians in the district who would willingly rally round and lend their support. Shall I approach them on your behalf?"

Herries almost leaped into the air for joy. He was in luck.

The rector of Wayland was an influential man, and would have little difficulty in persuading his musical parishioners to give their services.

And he—Herries—would have the honour of wielding the baton before this array of celebrities. How the fellows at St. Jim's would envy him!

"I'll be awfully obliged to you, sir," he said gratefully, as he made the pony secure in the stable. "We're holding the first practice at the public hall in Rylcombe on Friday evening at seven."

"I see. Will you stay to tea with us, my dear boy?"

Herries declined on the plea that his comrades were expecting him in Study No. 6. Then he bade an revoir to Mr. Wardle and his niece, and wheeled the damaged machine back to St. Jim's.

He dreamed dreams as he went along—dreams of a highly competent orchestra under his supreme control, and of a successful performance which would draw throngs of people to the public hall for an encore. Oh, yes! Everything would go without a hitch, he reflected, and he felt happy in the knowledge.

CHAPTER 7.

The Plotters!

LEVISON of the Fourth sat in his study. His face was set in a fierce scowl, and Mellish, who sprawled in the armchair with a cigarette in his mouth, could see that his

companion was not finding the world a very pleasant place to live in.

"Hang it all!" muttered Levison, starting to his feet, and pacing round the study to let off steam. "Hang Railton! And hang that beast Herries higher than all the lot! My hat! To think things should turn out like this!"

"Hard cheese!" said Mellish sympathetically, as he blew out a cloud of smoke. "Railton gave it to you pretty hot, didn't he?"

Levison surveyed his palms, which still ached as a result of the recent licking.

"It couldn't have been stiffer!" he growled. "I'd like to get my own back on him!"

"Oh, dash it all, he's not so bad, after all!" said Mellish.

It was surprising to hear Mellish make a statement of that sort, but even the rankest outsiders sometimes give glimpses of their better nature.

Levison grunted, and continued to pace to and fro, like a caged beast.

"Don't make such a row, for goodness' sake!" said Mellish. "We don't want one of the beaks to come in when the air's full of cigarette smoke!"

"Blow the beaks! Blow everybody! Look here——" Levison wheeled round suddenly on his crony. "I'm going to get even with that beast Herries! His rotten orchestra was the cause of the whole biznez. Got any suggestions to make?"

"What for?"

"Why, you chump, for making Herries squirm." Mellish shrugged his shoulders.

"He's had quite a warm enough time of it already, if you ask me," he said. "What with that prizefighter, and those other louts leading him the dickens of a dance, I should think he'd chuck up the orchestra wheeze."

"Rats! I saw him coming in at the gates just now, grinning all over his chivvy like a hyena. That means he's in clover. He's been down to the village, most likely, and persuaded a pack of idiots to join his rotten show. I heard him say something to Tom Merry about a rehearsal on Friday night."

Mellish sat bolt upright.

"A rehearsal! Then he's going strong, after all!"

"I suppose so. And it's up to us to wreck the show."

"Easier said than done," said Mellish, throwing the end of his cigarette into the fire.

"Oh, dry up!" snapped Levison. "If you can't say something cheerful, keep quiet! There's plenty of enterprise wanted for this job, and if you're not game to take a hand, I'll get Crooke or Racke to help me."

"Keep your wool on!" said Mellish. "Rely on me. But I don't quite see——"

"Of course not! You're as dense as a block of wood. Look here, what about taking a lot of fireworks down to the hall on Friday night and letting 'em off in the middle of the rehearsal?"

Mellish didn't seem much impressed.

"Just think of the sensation it would cause!" continued Levison, pressing his point. "Herries has persuaded a lot of old fogies to join his orchestra, by the look of things. Well, if we bombard the show with crackers, and squibs, and things, they'll get fed-up and refuse to turn up for any more rehearsals. Twig?"

"Something in that," said Mellish. "It's going to run into a good bit of tin, though."

"That's all right. I'm pretty flush. This is the idea, then. We'll buy a box of fireworks, cart



How the Austrians dealt with the arms of Liechtenstein.

THE POCKET COUNTRY

The stamps of Liechtenstein are well within the pocket of every schoolboy philatelist.

HAVEN'T you often felt rather curious about the stamps of Liechtenstein? For the most part, they are beautifully printed and designed, and, being well within the pocket of every schoolboy, make up into a most attractive little collection.

In the first place, Liechtenstein, with an area of sixty-five square miles and tucked away between the Swiss cantons of St. Gall and Graubünden and the Vorarlberg district of Austria, is one of the oldest independent countries of Central Europe. That being so, why is it that she did not start issuing stamps until 1912?

The answer is quite simple. Until the close of 1911 Liechtenstein's then powerful neighbour, Austria, managed the principality's postal affairs as well as her own, supplying current Austrian stamps for the purpose.

Then, on October 4th, 1911, the Liechtensteiners, having suddenly become very independent, signed an agreement with the Austrians to market their own stamps. Funnily enough, however, they only insisted on three values—the 5, 10, and 25 heller. Any others used could be Austrian ones.

CUT OFF FROM THE WORLD.

Prince John II had his portrait on the new stamps, which were printed and designed in Austria. Stamp issuing progressed under these conditions until the end of the War, when the downfall of Austria put paid to the Austrian controlled postal service. For a while Liechtenstein was completely cut off from postal communication with the rest of the world.

In 1920 Switzerland took pity on the famous sixty-five square miles and came to the rescue with her postal services. The existing Austria-

produced stamps were overprinted with scrolls to cover up the now-inappropriate wording on them, which read "Royal and Imperial Austrian Post." (K.K. Österr. Post.)

Shortly after this an organisation was developed which is unique in stamp history—a firm to market stamps virtually for the sole benefit of stamp collectors. This firm, which gave itself the high-falutin name of a consortium, might well have titled itself Liechtenstein Stamps, Limited.

FLOODING THE MARKET.

Realising that there were big profits to be made on stamps which would attract collectors, and would, therefore, incur for their sponsors very few genuine postal charges, they flooded the market with issue after issue.

With the currency at the time very favourable to foreign buyers, these stamps could—and still can—be picked up very cheaply. But this didn't worry the issuers. Operating from Austria, they "manufactured" rarities by introducing errors of colour and incorrect perforations!

As might be expected, when the truth leaked out there was a general outcry, but it was not until 1924 that this unfortunate state of affairs came to an end.

From 1924 onwards Liechtenstein stamps have ranked among the finest examples of the stamp designers' art. Much of this excellence is due to the keen interest shown in the country's stamps by the former ruler of Liechtenstein—Prince Francis I, who recently abdicated. Himself the owner of one of the finest private collections of pictures in Europe, he demanded the highest possible standard of workmanship from everyone concerned with the country's stamps.



"The old firm's" rendering of the same subject.

them into the hall, and let 'em off among the orchestra in the middle of the rehearsal."

"Topping!" said Mellish.

But he might not have thought it so topping had he seen a fat junior stealing along the passage outside. Baggy Trimble, the Peeping Tom of St. Jim's, had been busily engaged at the keyhole of Levison's study, and the plans of the two plotters had not escaped him. He had taken in every detail of the scheme for wrecking Herries' orchestra.

With his fat face framed in a greasy smile, Trimble made his way to Study No. 6.

Herries was there, playing a weird and wonderful melody, which was supposed to be "Men of Harlech."

"Get out!" he said tersely, on sighting Baggy Trimble.

Instead of obeying, Trimble advanced into the study.

"Look here," he said, before Herries had time to remonstrate with him. "I've just happened to hear a plot made by two rotters to smash your orchestra!"

Herries sprang forward, gripping the informant by the shoulder.

"Is that true?" he rapped out.

"Of course it is!"

"Then who are the fellows you heard, and what are they going to do?"

"Ah, that's telling!" said Trimble.

He rubbed his fat palms together and eyed Herries with smug satisfaction.

"If you care to make it worth while, I'll tell you," he added cunningly.

"You worm! How much do you want?"

"A couple of bob would do."

"I dare say it would. But as I haven't got

it you'll have to take a bob or nothing. Which is it to be?"

Trimble acted on the principle that half a loaf is better than no bread.

He reached out his hand for the shilling, and pocketed it greedily.

"Out with it—quick!" said Herries. "And tell me the truth, mind, or I'll jolly well scalp you!"

Trimble plunged into his story.

He told how Levison and Mellish intended, on Friday evening, to make use of fireworks, with a view to wrecking the orchestra.

Herries listened, with gleaming eyes. He sent Baggy Trimble about his business—which for the next five minutes would consist of gorging—and flung himself into the armchair to think.

His first impulse was to rush round to Levison's study and settle the matter with his fists. But there were other and better ways of nipping Levison's precious scheme in the bud. One of them occurred to Herries, and he put his cornet away, with a smile, and, donning his cap, strolled off towards the village.

There was only one place in Rylcombe at which fireworks could be obtained. It was a small store, kept by a man named Reeks, whom the St. Jim's junior encountered in the doorway.

"Good-afternoon!" he said. "My name's Herries, and I—"

"Herries!" said Mr. Reeks. "You're the young man that's running the orchestra?"

Herries nodded.

"Then put it there!" said Mr. Reeks affably. "Jolly glad to meet you. Mr. Wardle's told me about you, and I'm joining your show."

"You are?" said Herries eagerly. "Good man! Then you won't begrudge doing me a favour?"

"Certainly not, if it's in my power."

"Well, it's like this," said Herries. "We're having our first rehearsal on Friday night, and a couple of rotters at the school are going to try to wreck it, out of spite. They'll probably be coming here for some fireworks, with the intention of letting them off in the middle of the rehearsal."

"The young hounds!" said Mr. Reeks.

"But we can easily turn the tables on them," said Herries cheerfully. "When they come for the fireworks, make 'em up a box of beastly things that hayer't a spark in 'em. Drench 'em with water, if you like, so that they won't let out a single spark. Got me?"

"I have," said Mr. Reeks, with a chuckle.

"Good! That's the first part of the bizney. But the matter's not going to rest there. We must be revenged on the bounders. We'll have some genuine fireworks smuggled beneath the platform, and at a given signal we'll turn 'em loose on the cads."

Mr. Reeks laughed heartily.

"You've got 'em fair and square this journey," he said. "Quite a clever dodge, by Jove! Trust me to keep my part of the contract."

"Good!" said Herries.

He strolled back to St. Jim's congratulating himself that Levison and Mellish, instead of wrecking the rehearsal, would walk into a veritable hornet's nest themselves.

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CHAPTER 8.

Turning the Tables!

WHEN afternoon lessons were over on Friday, Levison and Mellish biked down to the village to carry out the first stage of their little plot.

They did not dream, as they sped along the hard, white road, that their arrangements for wrecking the rehearsal had already leaked out.

"It'll be great sport," chuckled Levison. "They're pretty certain to see us letting the fireworks off, of course; but we can bunk out of the hall before they've properly got the hang of things."

"Herries will make a song about it when he gets back to St. Jim's," said Mellish uneasily.

"Rats! If he does, the fellows won't take any notice. They're just as ratty about this rotten orchestra as we are."

The juniors jumped off at Mr. Reeks' shop and entered.

"Afternoon, young gents!" said Mr. Reeks, who looked as if butter wouldn't melt in his mouth. "What can I serve you with?"

"Fireworks—and plenty of 'em!" said Levison.

"Shall I make you up a box?"

"Yes. Shove in plenty of those awful things that go off like bombs, and leave a stench in the air for half an hour afterwards. And as many jumping crackers as you like."

Mr. Reeks got busy behind the counter. Levison and Mellish could not see his face, and they would have had rather a shock had they been able to, for it was framed in an expansive grin.

In a few moments the shopkeeper bobbed up again, and hauled to the surface of the counter a large box.

"There you are," said Mr. Reeks.

"What's the damage?" asked Levison.

"Fifteen shillings," said the shopkeeper. "But you can leave it, if you like."

Knowing, as he did, that the fireworks he had supplied were worthless, Mr. Reeks wanted no money for them. He knew, too, that Levison and Mellish would have quite enough fireworks from another quarter before long.

The two plotters carried the box across the street to the public hall.

Levison addressed the man in uniform who stood outside.

"Can we bring these in?" he said. "They're musical things, you know, belonging to Herries, the chap who's booked the hall to-night for a rehearsal."

"In you go, then!" said the official.

Levison and Mellish carted the box into the hall and dumped it down beside the wall. It was not likely that anybody would tamper with it. The officials would suppose that it contained music.

In great glee the plotters cycled back to St. Jim's. They felt that fortune was serving them kindly, for to score off Herries and his orchestra, and to shatter the Fourth Former's dreams, would amply revenge the licking Levison had received at the hands of Mr. Railton.

But the precious pair of rascals would have sung to another tune had they followed the movements of Herries that afternoon.

The leader of the orchestra, aided by Dick Brooke, smuggled into the public hall a box of genuine fireworks—fearful and wonderful things which spurted fire and flame in all directions.

A platform had been raised at the end of the hall, and on it the rehearsal was to take place.

Herries and Brooke deposited their box behind the grand piano, where it was not visible to anyone in the body of the hall.

"We'll go out and get some grub," said Herries; "then it'll be time for the rehearsal."

The juniors sat down to tea with good appetites. It gave them great satisfaction to know that the carefully arranged scheme of Levison was to recoil on his own head.

All the members of the orchestra were in their places when Herries and Brooke returned. Mr. Boozey-Smith, looking quite respectable, had turned up with his violin; and the Rev. Wardle, Mr. Reeks, and several other gentlemen of name and fame in the locality were engaged in strumming on their various instruments.

Herries stopped his ears.

"Dry up a minute!" he shouted. "I have a few words to say to you, gentlemen!"

Gradually the strains of music died away.

Herries faced the occupants of the platform.

"It's like this," he said. "Before the rehearsal starts we're going to have a sort of pyrotechnic display."

"A what?" gasped Mr. Boozey-Smith.

"A show of fireworks, you know," said Herries. "A couple of cads from St. Jim's are coming in with the object of wrecking the performance. Well, we're going to put a spoke in their wheel, and the wreckers are going to get wrecked—see?"

"Really!" said Mr. Wardle. "I fail to understand—"

"Behind the piano," said Herries, "there's a whacking big box of fireworks. Well, we're going to turn 'em loose on the audience before the show starts."

Mr. Wardle coughed

"Ahem! It is—er—rather beneath my dignity to aid and abet a schoolboy lark!"

"You can retire, if you like, sir," said Brooke graciously. "Then nobody can suspect you of having a hand in the business. Those rotters deserve to be punished. We can't let 'em go scot-free."

"Quite so—quite so!" said Mr. Wardle. "I will absent myself until the—er—pyrotechnic display is over."

He was not a minute too soon, for Levison and Mellish entered the hall, and seated themselves in the row of chairs in front of the platform.

"You've no objection to an audience, I suppose?" said Levison carelessly.

"Not at all! Hope you enjoy the show!" said Herries. "Now, gentlemen," he went on, hauling out the big box a few minutes later, "the performance will begin! All hands to the pump!"

The members of the orchestra, who were feeling indignant towards Levison and Mellish, plunged their hands into the box, and started lighting fireworks as if for a wager.

Herries was first in the field with a huge jumping cracker. He applied a match to it, and hurred it towards the astonished audience of two.

A volley of squibs followed.

Crack, crack, crack!

Whiz!

Bang, bang, bang!

Yells of alarm and rage from Levison and Mellish rent the air.

The gentlemen on the platform had by this time quite got their hands in, so to speak, and it simply rained fireworks.

"Quick!" hissed Levison in Mellish's ear.

"They're not the only people who've got fireworks!"

He dived at the box which he had obtained from Mr. Reeks, and speedily hauled out the contents.

"Matches!" he rapped out. "Don't stand there shouting 'Ow!' and 'Wow!' like a blessed talking dummy!"

Mellish hastily produced some matches and handed them to his accomplice.

With a snort of anger, Levison applied a light to the fuse of a bomb-shaped horror; then a cry of annoyance burst from his lips.

"It won't light!" he yelled wildly. "Somebody's been tampering with the confounded things! They're all damp, and— Yaroooh!"

While he was speaking a yellow terror pitched at his feet and sent up a fusillade of sparks, causing the cad of the Fourth to dance about like a dervish. The tables were turned on the two schemers.

"Here, I'm off out of this!" he muttered,



"Yes, his grandfather roars for Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer."

Half-a-crown has been awarded to Miss W. Walcott, 68, Derwent Road, Stirling, Birmingham.

shaking his fist at Herries, who surveyed him with a grin of triumph. "Oh, the rotters! I'm scorched all over, and my bags are ruined! Come on, Mellish! I can't stick this any longer!"

But Mellish was gone. He had had enough of that terrific bombardment; and enough, the old maxim tells us, is as good as a feast

CHAPTER 9.

Rogues in Council!

TWENTY minutes later the Rev. Wardle put his plump features round the door at the back of the hall.

"Is the—er—little exhibition of fireworks over?" he asked.

"Yes, sir," said Mr. Reeks, rubbing his hands with relish. "We've put the japers to rout. They had a good dose, and aren't likely to follow in the footsteps of Oliver Twist."

Herries and Brooke were chuckling. They would have a good story to tell when they got back to St. Jim's.

Levison and Mellish would discover that, like the gentleman in Shakespeare's play, they had heated a furnace for their foe so hot that it had singed themselves.

"Now to business!" said Herries. "We'll start off with an easy piece—'Little Grey Home in the West.'"

And a moment later, in time to the schoolboy conductor's baton, the rehearsal was in full swing.

It was a great success. There were little disputes, of course. Mr. Boozey-Smith, whose

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knowledge of music was as boundless as the ocean—to his own way of thinking—didn't like to be pulled up by Herries for failing to keep time, and Mr. Wardle was also a difficult customer to tackle.

Quite unintentionally, Herries called him a chump and a burbling jabberwock in the excitement of the moment, and no parson likes to be classed as a burbling jabberwock, especially in the presence of some of his parishioners.

But the members of the orchestra made allowances, realising that Herries was being carried away by his enthusiasm. Indeed, when the little party broke up, the Fourth Former was openly praised for his zeal.

The days sped by, and Herries' orchestra flourished apace.

Tom Merry & Co. went ahead with their football fixtures minus the services of Herries, and declaring that he was more or less a thundering idiot.

Monty Lowther predicted that the first public performance of the orchestra would also be the last, and that the musicians would reek of stale eggs for days afterwards.

To all these withering comments Herries turned a deaf ear.

At length the orchestra reached such a state of perfection that Herries went about with his head held very high in the air. He felt that he was well on the way to becoming another Toscanini. Fellows could laugh and chaff now; but how they would cheer when it became known that the funds of Wayland Hospital had increased considerably—and all through Herries.

When the orchestra had been practising a fortnight Herries had a number of circulars printed to the effect that a great musical entertainment would be given in the public hall on the following Saturday evening. People were invited to roll up in their thousands—rather an impossible invitation, when it was considered that the public hall only held two hundred or so.

One of the circulars found its way into Levison's hands.

"This is where we come in," he said to Mellish. "We must think out some plan for smashing up the show."

Mellish grunted.

"I'm sick of schemes!" he said. "That fire-work affair—"

"Oh, dash it all, let the past alone! We were badly bitten then, but there won't be any hitch this time."

"I'm not so sure."

"Don't be such an idiot!" snapped Levison irritably. "You get on my nerves. You're one of the cautious sort, who don't like to put one foot in front of the other. As I said before, if you haven't any stomach for the business, I'll have a jaw with Crooke and Racke."

Mellish melted at once. He was a coward at heart, but he was conceited, too, and didn't like the idea of the cads of the Shell being preferred to himself.

"I'm game!" he said. "Only for goodness' sake try and think out something a little more sensible this time!"

Levison was silent for some moments, but his brain was busy. He was not done with Herries yet, and there were no depths to which he would not descend in order to bring about the downfall of the orchestra.

"I've hit it!" he said at length. "It's a great wheeze—simply stunning!"

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"If it comes off," said Mellish dubiously.

"Of course it'll come off, fathead! Sling over some writing paper!"

Mellish obeyed, and Levison, drawing a chair up to the table, started to write.

His companion watched him in moody silence. Levison's little schemes had an unpleasant habit of turning out the wrong way, and Percy Mellish was not a fellow who could face the music without a good deal of fear and trembling.

"There!" said Levison, blotting the sheet. "That's a triumph of forgery, I reckon."

"What have you done?" asked Mellish, in alarm.

"Only written a letter in the name of our friend Herries."

"But why?"

"Read this, and you'll see."

Mellish scanned the letter. It was addressed to Billy Bunter, the fat boy of Greyfriars, who possessed an amazing capacity for stowing away the maximum amount of tuck in the minimum of time.

The letter ran thus:

"St. James' School,
Rylcombe,

Sussex.

"Dear Bunter,—As you have no doubt heard, I have formed an orchestra, and it was my intention to conduct at a public performance in Rylcombe Public Hall on Saturday evening. By



"Brooke, this is a trap!" gasped Herries. "Exact! make a struggle they were grasped by Levison, M

a stroke of rotten luck, however, I caught a chill, and shall therefore not be able to attend.

"It occurred to me, as I lay in bed in the sanny, that I could place the conductorship in no abler hands than your own. I've seen you several times when you've come over to St. Jim's, and what you don't know about music isn't worth knowing.

"Will you take my place? The men are rather a difficult crowd to manage, but I know you'll put 'em through it and not stand any bunkum. Be specially firm with the parson fellow—Wardle, his name is—and come down on him like a thousand of bricks, if he won't do as you tell him.

"You'd better tog up in evening clothes for the occasion, and I will see that there are plenty of good things in the way of refreshments.

"Enclosed is the amount of your railway fare to Rylcombe. You won't let me down, will you?

"Yours sincerely,

"GEORGE HERRIES."

Mellish read the letter, and drew a deep breath. "You—you're going to send this to Bunter?" he exclaimed.

"Right on the wicket, first time!"

"But—but what about Herries? He won't be likely to let Bunter take a free hand in the conducting."

"He won't be able to help himself," said Levison, grinning evilly. "We're going to kidnap him beforehand. See? Brooke, too, if necessary."



Jim Betts. "In yer go!" And before the victims could the pugilist, and hustled into the dank, gloomy vault.

"My hat!"

"Then the whole affair will be a howling farce," said Levison. "Bunter will turn up—you know what a conceited ass he is—and he'll bully Wardle and the rest of 'em till they're fed up, and kick him out of it. Bunter won't like that, but we're not out to study his feelings. So long as we make Herries knuckle under, nothing else matters."

Mellish brightened up.

"It's not a bad wheeze," he said rather grudgingly.

"Not bad? Why, I like that! I think it's jolly good," said Levison. "You wouldn't have thought of it! It's going to be one of the sensations of the term, my son."

"I'll take your word for it. Do you think Bunter'll turn up?"

"Yes, rather! The word refreshment will fetch him like a shot. It's like dangling a carrot under a donkey's nose."

Levison sealed the letter in high spirits, and went out into the quad to post it.

Tom Merry & Co. were there, punting a football about, but they took no notice of the cad of the Fourth.

But had they read the thoughts that were passing through Levison's mind at the moment they certainly would not have ignored him.

CHAPTER 10.

Bunter Bites!

"LETTER for Bunter!"

The sonorous voice of Bob Cherry boomed through the Remove passage at Greyfriars.

"Letter for me, did you say, Cherry?"

Billy Bunter, pompous and important, puffed his way along the passage like a human steam-engine.

Bob Cherry nodded.

"It's in the rack," he said.

Billy Bunter made his way to the letter-rack with all speed, followed by a wondering crowd.

Letters for Bunter were few and far between. The Owl of the Remove often spoke of his "vast correspondence," which existed, for the most part, in his own imagination. He was also supposed to receive ample allowances from his titled relations, but this was another fairy tale. Bunter simply teemed with fairy tales. He had not been brought up on the lines of George Washington.

But this time the letter was an assured fact.

Blogg, the postman, had brought it along with the midday delivery, and the Greyfriars juniors were naturally curious to know if one of the titled relations had at last turned up trumps.

"Might be a county court summons," laughed Harry Wharton.

"For obstructing the public thoroughfare," grinned Peter Todd.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Billy Bunter turned a deaf ear to these remarks. He reached up for the letter, and examined the postmark.

"Rylcombe!" said Skinner, looking over his shoulder. "Who lives at Rylcombe—Lord Bunter de Bunter?"

"It's a St. Jim's fellow, I suppose," growled Johnny Bull. "The fat worm's been trying to squeeze a loan out of D'Arcy, or something of that sort."

Bunter tore open the letter with feverish fingers. He made a great pretence of having

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expected it, but in his heart he didn't know the writer from Adam.

A postal order fluttered from the envelope, and Bunter grabbed at it, with a shout of triumph. "My remittance!" he exclaimed.

"Gammon!"

"It must be a fake!" said Harry Wharton.

But it was no fake. The postal order was genuine enough, and Billy Bunter tucked it carefully away in his pocket. The amount payable to him was seven-and-sixpence. It was not exactly princely, but the Greyfriars juniors were so unaccustomed to seeing Bunter in funds, that they gasped.

"Who's the Good Samaritan, Bunter?" asked Bob Cherry.

"Mind your own business!"

Billy Bunter read the letter, and his little round eyes twinkled behind his spectacles.

As he read his chest began to swell and his snub nose gradually tilted itself into the air.

"What the merry dickens has happened?" asked Nugent. "Don't keep us in this harrowing suspense, Bunter!"

The Owl of the Remove turned to his school-fellows, with a superior smile.

"At last!" he exclaimed.

"Well, you needn't be so melodramatic about it," said Wharton. "What do you mean?"

"At last my talents have been properly recognised!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Talents!" said Bob Cherry, in surprise. "Has anybody ever known Bunter to possess any talents?"

He can get through a pound of cherry-cake in record time, and he can guzzle ginger-pop like a fish!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You fellows have closed your eyes to 'em," said Bunter loftily. "You're simply caten up with jealousy. I suppose you don't know what a stunning musician I am? You've never heard me, I take it?"

"No, except in the dormitory," said Wharton. "Your snoring would wake fifty Rip Van Winkles!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You can laugh!" said Bunter. "I've just been offered a job that'll fairly make you turn green with envy. I've got to conduct a big orchestra at Rylcombe on Friday evening!"

"Rot!"

"He's talking out of his hat!" said Bolsover major.

Bunter handed over the letter.

"Read that," he said, "and then you'll see for yourselves that I'm not rotting!"

The little group of Removites read the letter which Levison of St. Jim's had so skillfully forged, and exclamations of astonishment arose.

"Of course, it's a jape," said Harry Wharton, at length. "Herries is pulling your leg, Bunter."

"Absolutely," said Bob Cherry. "If he's ill, as he says, he's got somebody at St. Jim's to act as deputy. Why should he want a tame lunatic like Bunter?"

"Oh, really, Cherry! I reckon he knows a good conductor when he sees one!"

"Bow-wow!"

"It's a trick of some sort," said Nugent. "Bunter's going to walk right into a trap with his eyes shut, as usual. Let him!"

Billy Bunter giggled.

"You fellows are wild because none of you

has been asked," he said. "There's going to be refreshments, and plenty of 'em; and that's where you'll be left out in the cold. He, he, he!"

Harry Wharton & Co. resisted a strong inclination to bump the fat junior on the flagstones, and strode away.

They were certain that Bunter was being made the victim of a practical joke; but as he had chosen to disregard their warning, he must take the consequences.

"I won't write and tell Herries I'm coming," mused Bunter. "It's Saturday morning, so there's really no need. Lemme see! What does the fellow say? 'You'd better tog up in evening dress for the occasion.'"

Billy Bunter made a grimace. He was not at all averse from wearing evening dress, but in the present circumstances it seemed impossible. Evening dress was unknown to his limited wardrobe.

"I must bag some," he muttered. "Now, I wonder—" His thoughts instinctively turned to Lord Mauleverer, the schoolboy earl, whose wardrobe was on the most lavish scale.

"Yes, I can get 'em from Mauly," said Bunter. And he scuttled off to his lordship's study.

Mauly was there. That is to say, he was present in body, but far away in spirit. His elegant limbs were stretched at full length on the sofa, and a gentle snore vibrated through the air.

"Good!" said Bunter. "I won't wake him, as he looks so comfy. He won't mind if I borrow his dress clothes."

And leaving the study, he hastened up to the dormitory. There he tumbled all the clothes out of Mauly's wardrobe in a disorderly heap.

"Aha!"

Billy Bunter pounced upon a white, stiff-fronted shirt, and proceeded to change his clothes.

There were numerous drawbacks confronting the newly appointed band-conductor. In the first place, the trousers were uncomfortably tight, and the shirt felt as if it would burst asunder at any moment, while the collar chafed Bunter's fat neck.

Then, again, the topper which Bunter purchased from Mauly's hatbox wasn't at all a good fit.

But Bunter bore these discomforts like a hero. He soon equipped himself, and then strutted out of the dormitory as proud as a peacock, and descended to the Remove passage.

Bob Cherry, who was in the passage, nearly fell down at Bunter's appearance.

"M-m-m my only maiden aunt!" he gasped.

Bunter gave him a condescending glance.

"Don't act the giddy goat, Cherry," he said. "Is this the first time you've seen a person well-dressed?"

"Over-dressed, I should say!" panted Bob. "My hat! Whose pawshop have you been raiding now?"

"My pal Mauly kindly lent me this change of clothing," said Bunter, with great dignity.

Bob Cherry stared in surprise.

"What's that?" he roared. "You've been robbing Mauly, you fat toad?"

"N-no! I didn't—I wasn't—" stammered Bunter.

And then, filled with alarm at the fierce look on Bob Cherry's countenance, he took to his heels and sped down to the school gates like a champion on the cinder path.

Continued on page 22.)



THE ADVENTURES of **HARRY** and his **HERCULES** CYCLE

Episode 1.

FILM FAME



AS HARRY ARRIVES BACK, DIRECTOR HEATHCOT IS TAKING ANOTHER SHOT FROM THE FILM. HARRY DOES NOT KNOW THIS AND DASHES ON TO THE SET.



SO HARRY WANDERS OFF DISGRUNTLED HE'S DONE TEN MILES IN RECORD TIME AND DOESN'T EVEN GET THANKED FOR HIS TROUBLE!



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By Hercules

IT'S THE BIKE TO BUY!

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With all his short-sightedness, Billy Bunter was aware that Bob was a pastmaster in the art of hitting straight from the shoulder.

CHAPTER 11. Spirited Away!

"**F**EELING down in the mouth—what?"

Levison of the Fourth asked the question.

He was strolling with Mellish through Rylcombe, and sighted Jim Betts, the powerful pugilist, who had caused such a commotion in Tom Merry's study a week before.

Jim Betts was standing with his back to the door of the Green Man public-house.

His lips were moving, and he was probably engaged in slanging the Government for not allowing licensed houses to be open for the better part of the day.

It was at this juncture that he was hailed by Levison.

"Wot d'yer want?" said Jim Betts, removing his cigarette from his mouth, and glaring at the St. Jim's juniors.

"You," said Levison. "We want you to do a little job for us—a nice little job, exactly in your line."

"Is there any oof sticking to it?"

"Oh, pots!" said Levison confidently. "How'd you like to earn a quid for a trifling bit of work?"

"Work!" murmured Jim Betts. "I don't like that word. It sort o' leaves a nasty taste in the mouth."

"It won't be hard work, you know," Levison went on. "A couple of chaps have got to be collared, and we want you to give us a hand."

"Ho! And wot sort o' blokes are they?"

"That chap Herries who made things so jolly unpleasant for you the other day, and a pal of his."

Jim Betts stirred himself at last. The idea of paying off the score he owed Herries appealed to his brutal nature.

"I'm game," he said. "You want me to 'elp you nab 'em for a quid—eh?"

"And put them out of the way somewhere," said Levison. "This is the wheeze. Herries is giving a public performance of his beastly orchestra to-night, and we want to nip it in the bud. Herries and the other chap, Brooke, will be along shortly. I heard 'em say they intended to be on the scene early."

"And they've got to be stopped," said Mellish.

"Ave you thought about 'ow you're goin' to do it?" asked the pugilist.

"I can't say that I have. Anyway, it's simple," said Levison, rather vaguely. "We can knock 'em down—or, at least, you can, and then, after stringing 'em up, we can take 'em along to some barn, and make 'em prisoners."

Jim Betts shook his head.

"Sounds all right," he said. "These things always do, until you comes to carry 'em out."

"Don't you think it's possible, then?"

"No; a barn's no good. I've shut many a cove into a barn in me time, but they generally manages to get out and show themselves at an awkward moment. No; shove the idea of a barn outer yer noddle. An' the knockin'-down part, too. That's no good. Somebody'd

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see us, and it'd only lead to ructions. I know a trick worth two o' that. Gimme a minute to think, an' I'll tell you 'ow we'll set about it."

Levison and Mellish remained silent, though they cast several anxious glances down the village street.

It would not do for a master or a prefect to see them in conversation with one of the worst characters in the neighbourhood.

"I've got it," said Jim Betts at length. "The crypt!"

"The what?" said Levison and Mellish together.

"The old crypt underneath the church. Nobody ever goes there, an' our two friends will lie there nice and quiet, an' give no trouble."

"I see," said Levison. "First of all, you bowl 'em over—"

"I shan't do nothin' of the sort! Let's walk up to 'em 'orridified-like, an' say we can 'ear groanin' down in the crypt under the church. They'll foller us there like 'umble lambs, and we'll bang the door in their faces as soon as they're inside. It's a simple plan, but the simple plans nearly always work out the best."

"By Jove!" said Levison, in tones of excitement. "I see your point now. Mellish and I will trot round to the crypt at once, and you can bring the two beasts along. They'll be suspicious if they see the three of us in the street together."

"Quite so," said Jim Betts. "You get off, an' I'll wait 'ere till they come."

"You won't fail?" said Mellish.

"Me fail? Not likely! By the way"—Jim Betts cleared his throat—"you couldn't let me 'ave the quid beforehand? I've run out of fags."

Levison handed over a ten-shilling note.

"You can have the other half when we're through with the job," he said.

"Very good! Thanks!"

Levison and Mellish sauntered away in the direction of the church, and Jim Betts remained on guard at the door of the public-house.

He didn't have long to wait.

Herries and Brooke, deep in conversation, came striding along the street.

Jim Betts detached himself from the doorpost, and approached the two juniors, puffing and blowing as if he had just reached the tape after a marathon race.

"Young gents!" he panted.

"Hallo!" said Dick Brooke. "What's the matter?"

"Which I've just 'eard the most 'orrible sounds ever!" said Jim Betts dramatically. "If you asks me anythin' about it, there's murder being committed."

"My hat!" said Herries. "You must have been drinking, man!"

"No fear!" said the pugilist, shaking his head sadly. "The pubs is closed."

"Where are the horrible sounds coming from?" said Brooke, with a laugh.

"Down in the crypt under the church. I dursn't look in, but there's somebody there sufferin' terrible hagony, you can take my word for it!"

Herries looked at Brooke.

"Better come and see what's up," said Herries, at length. "Might be something in it. Lead the way, Betts!"

Without a suspicion that they were being lured into captivity, the two juniors followed Jim Betts to the church.



"Get on with the washing!" said Bunter. "I'm not putting up with any slackers, my man!" Mr. Boozey-Smith flushed crimson and started to rise to his feet. At the same moment Billy Bunter gave him a smart rap on the head with his baton.

"Ark!" he said.

"I can't hear anything," said Herries. "Betts, you scoundrel, is this your idea of a joke? Why, my hat!"

He broke off suddenly as he caught sight of the grinning, leering faces of Levison and Mellish. Next moment they were in the grasp of the three plotters.

"Brooke, this is a trick! We're trapped!"

"Exactly!" said Jim Betts. "In yer go!"

And before the victims could make a single struggle, the heavy iron door was flung open, and they were hustled into the dank, gloomy vault.

"Good-bye, Bluebell!" sang out Mellish.

And then the door clanged to again, and the plotters' work was complete. In the crypt, Herries and Brooke regarded each other with glum faces.

"What asses we were!" muttered Herries. "We might have expected something of this sort! That brute Betts had it all cut-and-dried, and Levison and Mellish put him up to it."

"But—but what's the idea?" said Brooke dazedly.

"Don't you see? Levison's been doing his level best to knock our orchestra on the head, and now he's succeeded. It's too awful for words!"

"And what's going to happen about the performance?"

"There won't be one, of course! How can there be a performance without me there to conduct? Oh, my stars!"

"Is there no other way out of this place?" asked Brooke.

"None!" said Herries gloomily. "I heard the key grate in the lock. We're prisoners, fair and square. And if we don't make those cads writhe for this when we get out, I'll never put my lips to a cornet again!"

And Herries meant what he said.

CHAPTER 12.

Billy Bunter's New Role!

"GOIN' to the concert, deah boys?"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, resplendent in his Sunday best, and smoothing a silk topper with his slim white hand, looked into Study No. 6.

Blake and Digby were there, wrangling on that undying topic, the offside rule in footer.

"What's that?" said Jack Blake. "The concert, Gussy? Which one?"

"The one in the village, of course," said Arthur Augustus. "Hewwies has already gone down to lick his orchestwah into shape."

"Blow Herries and his orchestra! Who wants to tramp all the way to the village to hear a row like cats performing on the tiles?"

"But it's not all instrumental music, deah boy! In between the selections there will be some songs. I shall wendah 'La Donna e Mobile' and—"

"Mercy!" groaned Digby.

"Dwy up, you ass! Are you comin' or are you not?"

"Not!" said Blake promptly. Then he paused.

He had forgotten that the proceeds of the performance were to be devoted to Wayland Hospital. That made all the difference, of course. He felt he ought to rally round for the good of the cause.

"Might as well come along," he said. "We'll rag Herries afterwards, though, if the show's a wash-out!"

"It won't be a wash-out, deah boy!" said Arthur Augustus confidently. "I'm singin', you know!"

"Br-r-r-r!"

Blake and Digby put on their caps, and accompanied the swell of St. Jim's into the quad.

Quite a number of fellows from both Houses were going towards the gates, evidently with the same intention as the chums of Study No. 6.

"It's a noble sacrifice we're making!" Monty Lowther was heard to say. "To sit for hour after hour listening to Herries' orchestra will require nerves of steel!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"But Wayland Hospital will benefit," said Tom Merry. "We mustn't forget that. Bung cotton-



"We don't seem to be moving very fast, Horace."

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wool into your ears, and sit tight till it's over, and you'll have the satisfaction of knowing you've done your bit."

The juniors tramped on towards the village. Many of them carried missiles in their pockets, in case the orchestra became simply unendurable. Upon the whole, the prospect in store for the musicians could scarcely be called rosy.

"Hallo!" exclaimed Jack Blake, a few minutes later, stopping short in the village street. "What's this?"

"Solomon in all his glory, by Jove!" murmured Monty Lowther.

A fat figure, clad in a suit of evening dress several sizes too small for him, so that the seams looked like bursting at a moment's notice, came strutting along the street.

It was Billy Bunter, freshly arrived from Greyfriars.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was the first to identify the weird and wonderful apparition.

"Buntah!" he gasped.

"That's me!" said Billy Bunter, his face beaming like a full moon. "So you fellows are coming along to swell the audience—what? There'll be a record attendance."

"But—but I don't understand!" stammered Tom Merry. "What in the name of all that's wonderful are you doing here?"

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"Why, my dear chap," said Bunter, "haven't you heard? I'm deputising for Herries!"

"What?"

"It's a fact. I'm conducting the show to-night, and it's going to be a great success!"

"Gwreat Scott!"

Tom Merry gazed at the fat junior more in pity than in anger.

"You poor ass!" he said. "Somebody's been pulling your leg. Herries is running the show himself, of course!"

Bunter smiled.

"Really, you're misinformed," he said. "Herries has caught a chill, and he's asked me to come over and take his place."

"But Herries was as right as rain a few hours ago!" protested Digby. "It's all a mistake!"

"It isn't!" chimed in a cool voice. "Herries is seedy, and Bunter's taking his place."

The juniors swung round, to find Levison standing before them. With him was Mellish, and both were grinning.

"Of course," said Levison, "we shall miss the cornet solos that Herries intended to give, but that's a detail."

Tom Merry & Co. were too thunderstruck by this sudden turn of events to enter into an argument with Levison, although they more than suspected that the cad of the Fourth had been up to some shady trick. But Bunter had come all the way from Greyfriars to conduct the concert, and it would be bad form, the fellows felt, to kick him out now.

"See you after the show, you fellows!" said the fat junior.

And he rolled away in the direction of the public hall.

Levison and Mellish were not slow to follow. They did not wish to remain too long in their schoolfellows' company, lest awkward questions should be asked.

Meanwhile, the members of the orchestra, got up in style for the occasion, had put in an appearance, and were not a little annoyed at finding Herries conspicuous by his absence.

"If he doesn't come soon," observed Mr. Wardle, looking at his watch, "I shall have to—ah—wield the baton in his place."

"Excuse me," said Mr. Boozey-Smith doggedly, "but I'm the man to do that. Every man to his trade, you know. You're a parson; I'm a musician. Even as a youngster I was able to make melodies."

"I don't doubt it," said the rector dryly.

Matters were warming up when Billy Bunter suddenly came upon the scene.

He was looking pompous and important, and glanced critically through his glasses at the men under his command.

"Let me introduce myself," he said airily. "My name is Bunter, and I am conducting this show in place of Herries, who is ill."

"Bless my soul!" murmured Mr. Reeks. "Herries ill! What a nuisance!"

"Rats!" said Bunter promptly. "It's a blessing in disguise, really. He wouldn't have made half such a good job of it as I shall. Now, I'm going to stand no nonsense. You—you red-nosed freak with the fiddle, you hear what I say?"

Mr. Boozey-Smith, to whom the remark was addressed, stood petrified. He tried to find speech, but in vain, which was perhaps just as well, for the words he would have uttered would most certainly have shocked the Rev. Mr. Wardle.

Billy Bunter glanced over his shoulder.

"The audience is beginning to roll up," he said. "Clear the deck for action! By the way, is there any grub knocking about? I understood Herries to say—"

"G-g-grub?" stammered Mr. Reeks, aghast. "Is it your intention to—"

"Dry up," said Bunter. "As conductor of this show, I've a right to do as I like!"

A screen had been erected on the platform, and Billy Bunter went behind it to explore.

To his delight his eyes fell upon a large dinner-wagon stacked with all sorts and conditions of pastry, and bottles of ginger-beer.

"Oh, my hat!"

Billy Bunter reached out eagerly to make a start on the comestibles, splitting the seams at each shoulder as he did so.

Maul's dress-coat was ripped up at the back, too; but what did that matter at a moment like this? There was grub—whole stacks of it—and as for the orchestra, reflected Bunter—well, blow the orchestra! It could go to that much-recommended resort, Jericho!

Impatient cries began to go up from the members of the audience. The performance was timed to commence at seven, and it was five minutes past already.

"Buck up, Bunter!"

"Set the ball rolling, there!"

Billy Bunter, who was at grips with a huge jam sponge, came to himself with a start.

Perhaps, after all, he had better go and conduct, or the indignant audience would hurl him forth on his neck.

So, with ponderous steps, Billy Bunter marched to the front of the platform.

His appearance was greeted with a ringing yell of laughter. Ventilation holes peeped in profusion from his evening dress, and there was a long, red smear of raspberry jam across his fat cheek.

"Disgusting!" said Mr. Wardle. "If Herries is ill he might have arranged for a rational human being to take his place, not this—this fat beast!"

"Stop that jaw!" said Bunter. "You're like a pack of old women! Now then, where do we begin?"

"The Lost Chord" was the first item. It was a lost chord in every sense of the term.

Billy Bunter flourished the baton in wild whirls and put the long-suffering members of the orchestra hopelessly out of time.

Mr. Boozey-Smith performed at a stately pace on his fiddle; but the piccolos and the clarinets, taking their time from Bunter—as far as was possible to do so, galloped along at a breakneck speed, as if they were playing a particularly lively hunting ditty.

Ever and anon arose the solemn tinkle of the triangle, which was being manipulated by the village blacksmith.

"Oh, my hat!"

"Drown it, somebody!"

To judge by the excited shouts of the audience the performance was anything but a concord of sweet sound. The more the musicians tried to keep in time, the more Billy Bunter put them off their stroke, so to speak.

Mr. Boozey-Smith shook his head in despair, and his instrument went clattering to the floor.

Billy Bunter strode towards him.

"Get on with the washing!" he said. "I'm not putting up with any slackers, my man!"

(Continued on next page.)



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, Farrington Street, London, E.C.4.

HALLO, CHUMS! There's some great news for you all this week! As announced on page 5, a grand stamp-collecting scheme is starting in next week's GEM, with hundreds of splendid prizes—including fifteen bikes—waiting to be won. The scheme is simplicity itself, and every reader will have an equal chance of winning a prize. All you have to do is collect the various kinds of stamps—such as Bombers, Guns, Battleships, etc.—which will be printed in the GEM. In our companion papers, "Magnet" and "Modern Boy," you will also find more stamps. The idea is to collect as many of these stamps as possible, and at the end of May prizes will be awarded to those readers who have the largest collections of one or more kinds of stamps. Full details of the scheme will appear in next Wednesday's GEM.

This is the chance of a lifetime of winning a brand-new bike, or a cricket bat, or a camera, or any of the other tip-top prizes to be awarded. But remember, collect all the stamps you can—and start right away next week. There'll be a big rush on the GEM, "Magnet," and "Modern Boy," so take my tip and place a standing order to-day for these papers.

"TOM MERRY & CO.'S DOG SHOW!"

Having told you that ripping news, let's take a look at the other grand things in next week's GEM. The long complete St. Jim's story stars Tom Merry & Co. in an unusual, amusing, and exciting adventure. The yarn turns upon their efforts to raise the wind to help a stranger down on his luck, who, at considerable risk to himself, has rescued Cousin Ethel's dog from drowning. But there's something suspicious about the stranger—for Talbot recognises him as one of the gang which the junior belonged to in his crackman days!

The juniors go ahead, however, in trying to raise money for the man. Tom Merry & Co. run a dog show, and so the New House juniors set up a cat show in rivalry—with what results I will not tell you here, because I don't want to lessen interest in the yarn. But, believe me, there's some wild excitement over the dog and cat show—and there's a big surprise for the St. Jim's juniors when it's all over!

"FIRST MAN IN!"

Cricket is in the air again, and at Greyfriars the clack of bat meeting ball is heard on the playing fields. The Remove Cricket Club look forward keenly to the coming season, and all the juniors are eager to get to practice. But none is so eager as Billy Bunter when he finds that his name has been included in one of the teams for the Remove trial match. He is soon imagining himself another Bradman or Hammond, and showing his Form-fellows just how cricket should be played. But unfortunately for Bunter, his dreams don't work out in practice, and though he's first man in he's also first man out!

As usual, all our other features are up to their high standard, while, in addition, there will be a new feature—the GEM Spelling Bee, to test the abilities of readers as spellers.

All the best, chums!

THE EDITOR.
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Mr. Boozey-Smith flushed crimson, and started to rise to his feet. At the same instant Billy Bunter gave him a smart rap on the head with his baton.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"One for his nut!" chuckled Monty Lowther. "Now we shall see some fireworks!" They did!

Mr. Boozey-Smith seemed to possess a desire—not altogether unreasonable—to transform Bunter into a sort of table jelly.

He rushed at the fat junior, who promptly dodged to one side.

The result was appalling.

Mr. Boozey-Smith, with all the grace of a skilled roller-skater, skidded across the platform and disappeared over the edge.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bump!

Billy Bunter, seeing that his enemy was hors de combat, hastened to the dinner-wagon and proceeded to make merry with the pastries.

As for the other members of the orchestra, they had stopped playing, and were gazing at the audience in mute appeal, as if to say: "Please arrange for the floor to open and swallow us up!"

But the audience was not sympathetic. On the contrary, it was stony-hearted.

Somebody rapped out an order, and the next instant a fusillade of eggs—more ancient than modern—together with over-ripe apples and squashed tomatoes, crashed into the orchestra.

There were many casualties.

Mr. Wardle caught one of the eggs on the tip of his nose, and was almost overcome by the fumes. But they were nothing compared with what was to come.

Mr. Wardle's colleagues, too, had a terrible two minutes. Missiles smashed upon them in a deluge, and they were compelled to clutch their instruments and run—anywhere, so long as they got clear of that deadly fusillade.

"The band race!" said Monty Lowther. "Go it, ye cripples! The chap with the triangle ought to be scratch. He hasn't got such a load as Boozey-Smith and the rest of 'em. Oh, my only maiden aunt!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The unhappy members of the orchestra beat a hasty and undignified retreat from the premises.

Peal upon peal of laughter followed them, and as they plunged into the village street, with the odour of bad eggs still clinging to their clothing, they heaped bitter imprecations on the day when they had agreed to take part in that ill-fated orchestra.

CHAPTER 13.

A Licking For Two!

THE only person remaining on the platform after the practical jokers of St. Jim's had finished their bombardment was Billy Bunter.

He had got behind the screen, and in that safe place had partaken of one of the finest feeds he could ever remember.

Billy Bunter was not an utter fool. He realised that the sooner he shook the dust of Rylcombe from his feet the better it would be for him.

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The ejected members of the orchestra, if they came across him, would certainly show no mercy.

So Bunter crammed as many pastries as he could into his pockets and slipped out of the back door.

Then, seeing that the coast was clear, he made hurried tracks for the railway station. He had made his first—and probably last—appearance in public as a conductor of music.

As for the St. Jim's juniors, they left the public hall with mixed feelings.

Some felt sorry that such a movement should have come to nothing; others regarded the whole affair as a huge joke. But none were so elated as Levison and Mellish. It was not very often that they scored such a distinct triumph, and the knowledge that they had "downed" Herries made them feel pleased.

The St. Jim's fellows were moving in a crowd along the High Street, when suddenly there lurched into sight the familiar figure of Jim Betts.

The pugilist was not sober, and he cannoned heavily into the Terrible Three, who were walking ahead.

"My hat!" exclaimed Tom Merry. "Here's that prizefighting brute! He's been drinking, too. Let's bump him!"

"Good egg!" said Manners.

Jim Betts steadied himself, and his eyes, blinking at the throng of juniors, finally rested on Levison and Mellish.

"See 'ere," he said thickly, "where's my ten bob?"

"Shurrup, you idiot!" muttered Mellish, in alarm.

"Ijut, am I? I'll ijut yer! You give me ten bob for puttin' them two coves away, an' now you owes me another ten. What I says is this 'ere—pay up, or be paid!"

"Oh, you scoundrel!" hissed Levison. "You've properly let the cat out of the bag now!"

"What little game have you been up to?" demanded Tom Merry. "Answer me, or you'll get the bumping of your life!"

Jim Betts was cowed at the sight of so many determined-looking juniors. He deemed it wise to obey.

"These two fellers 'ere," he said, indicating Levison and Mellish, "offered me a quid if I'd put Master 'Erries and 'is pal out of the way. They give me ten bob when I started off, an' now they owes me another ten. Make 'em 'and it over, young gent. You looks a sport."

Tom Merry ignored the request. His eyes were gleaming.

"Where are Herries and Brooke?" he asked. "Quick, man!"

"Down in the crypt under the church," said Jim Betts.

"And these two fellows told you to hide them there?"

"Certingly!"

"It's a lie!" shouted Levison. "The man's drunk, and doesn't know what he's saying. Surely you're not going to believe such a cock-and-bull yarn, Merry?"

For answer, Tom Merry took a firm grip on Levison, and requested his chums to take care of Mellish.

"March 'em along to the crypt," he said grimly. "We'll soon see if there's any truth in the business. As for you, you precious rascal"—Tom gave Jim Betts a glance that ought to have shrivelled him up—"we'll give you ten seconds to clear!"



A free feature which brings together readers all over the world for the purpose of exchanging views on matters of mutual interest. If you wish to reply to a notice published here you must write to the Pen Pal direct. Notices for publication should be accompanied by the coupon on this page, and posted to The GEM, Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.

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Jim Betts promptly took the hint. He slouched unsteadily into a side alley, and was soon lost to sight in the darkness.

Then a big procession of St. Jim's fellows made its way to the church.

All were talking excitedly—all save Levison and Mellish, who were quaking in apprehension of the trouble to come.

The Terrible Three, pushing the culprits before them, plunged down the steps and halted outside the door of the crypt.

"Where's the key?" demanded Tom Merry, tightening the pressure of his grip on Levison's arm.

"How should I know? Betts had it," said Levison sullenly.

Luckily, Jim Betts left it hanging up outside, and Jack Blake pounced upon it at once.

"Now we shall see what we shall see!" he said, unlocking the big door.

The juniors crowded into the crypt, and above the hollow echo of their voices came a cry of relief:

"At last!"

Herries and Brooke leapt to their feet in the darkness.

"Bai Jove!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "Hewwies! Bwooke, deah boy! You've been locked in!"

"It doesn't need a Fenners Locke to make that out!" grumbled Herries. "I s'pose the concert fell flat?"

"Not exactly!" grinned Monty Lowther. "Billy Bunter came over from Greyfriars to conduct."

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R. H. Bestall, 81, Commercial Road, Pietermaritzburg, Natal, S. Africa ; sports, stamps ; any islands of the Atlantic and of the Pacific, also the British Empire, other than S. Africa, India, and Australia.

T. O'Loughlin, 38, North Street, Middleton, Manchester ; age 15-17 ; soccer, dance bands, sport in general ; Canada, Australia, Africa and N. America.

D. P. Coltart, 41, Barndale Road, Mossley Hill, Liverpool 18, Lancs ; age 14-17 ; topics of common interest.

M. C. MacKay, Beech Cottage, Hewmachar, Aberdeenshire ; music, sport, stamp collecting ; America or Canada.

J. Mitchell, Bedford House, Callander, Perthshire, Scotland ; age 13-15 ; stamps, sports ; overseas, preferably India and S. Africa.

O. L. Smith, 88, Persimmon Street, Malvern, Johannesburg, S. Africa ; age 20-30 ; stamps, postcards, and general topics.

G. Hetherington, 66, Hannah Street, Collyhurst, Manchester 9, Lancs ; age 16-17 ; postcards ; overseas.

D. Abbot, 79, Hartswood Road, Shepherds Bush, London, W.12 ; age 15-19 ; sports, films, and animals ; any part of the world except England.

P. Tishaw, 24, Campion Road, Putney, London, S.W. ; age 14-16 ; cycling, rowing, rugby, skating, tennis, fishing.

E. McDonnell, 57, Bouverie Street, Chester, Cheshire ; age 12-13 ; sports.

PEN PALS COUPON

30-4-38

"My hat!"

"He said you wrote and asked him to," said Tom Merry.

"What!" roared Herries. "I did nothing of the sort! This is some more of Levison's trickery! My hat, I—I'll make a table-jelly of him!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"We shall have to wag the feahful wottals!" said Arthur Augustus. "Shall we bump them, deah boys?"

"Bumping's no good," said Tom Merry. "I'll tell you what wouldn't be a bad wheeze. Let Herries tackle Levison, and Brooke tackle Mellish. We can stand by to pick up the pieces!"

Mellish turned pale.

"I—I don't want to fight!"

"Of course not!" said Jack Blake scathingly. "But you've got to take your gruel this time! Come on!"

A movement was made to a quiet meadow near by, and Herries and Brooke, who had chafed under their long confinement, peeled off their coats grimly in the gloom.

The orchestra had been ruined, and the respective countenances of Levison and Mellish seemed likely to share the same fate.

Herries and Brooke opened the attack almost at once, and the next moment a couple of one-sided scraps were in full progress.

Nobody attempted to interfere, even when

(Continued on page 36.)

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IT'S DANCING TIME FOR THE CHUMS OF THE REMOVE—EVEN BUNTER
SHAKES A NIMBLE FOOT!

The Remove Goes Gay!

By FRANK RICHARDS.

(Author of the grand long yarns of Greyfriars appearing
every Saturday in our companion paper, the "Magnet.")

WHAT HAPPENED LAST WEEK.

Cliff House, a new school for girls, is opening near Greyfriars, and Harry Wharton & Co. decide to meet Miss Penelope Primrose and her fair pupils on their way to Cliff House and give them a neighbourly welcome.

But when the newcomers are almost due to appear Wharton discovers Bulstrode, the Remove bully, preparing to scare the girls with fireworks. There follows a fight, and, as a result of it, Wharton finds himself in bad odour with Miss Primrose.

In Harry's absence Bob Cherry makes the welcoming speech to the headmistress of Cliff House, and the good lady is so pleased that later she invites the Remove to a fancy dress dance at Cliff House to celebrate the opening of the school.

(Now read on.)

The Uninvited!

THERE was excitement in the Greyfriars Remove the following day. A fancy dress ball was something quite out of the common for the Removites, and it was natural that they should think and talk of nothing else. Even the last football match of the season paled in importance beside it.

It was not only the fun and excitement of the dance, but the fact that it was the Removites alone who were asked to Miss Primrose's little celebration. The juniors were glad enough that they had backed up Harry Wharton's idea of giving a public welcome to the girls of the new Cliff House school.

Temple, Dabney & Co. were ready to kick themselves, if that would have done any good. For the sake of the dance they would willingly have extended the olive branch to the Remove and fraternised cordially with the heroes of the Lower Fourth. But the Lower Fourth were not accepting any olive branches just then.

Hazeldene, who as Marjorie's brother was the person in communication with Cliff House, found himself very much sought after by the Upper Fourth fellows. Temple, Dabney & Co. waylaid him after morning school, and asked him into the tuckshop with bland smiles.

Hazeldene accepted the invitation; he also accepted ginger-beer, lemonade, jam tarts, toasted scones, and cream puffs. The generosity of the Upper Fourth fellows knew no bounds, and Hazeldene's appetite seemed to be equally unlimited. But when they approached the delicate subject they had in mind Hazeldene was like a rock.

"I hear you're going to the dance at Cliff House," Temple remarked.

"Yes, to-night," said Hazeldene, beginning on his ninth tart. "I say, these tarts are ripping!"

"Have some more. Some fresh tarts here for Hazeldene, Mrs. Minible, and mind they're the best."

"Oh, rather!" said Dabney.

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"I hear you're in charge of the invitations, and can take any chaps you like," Temple went on agreeably.

"Any chaps in my own Form," said Hazeldene. "Well, any juniors, I suppose."

"Oh, no! Third Form fags would be out of place, of course."

"What about the Upper Fourth?"

"Are you a junior Form?" asked Hazeldene, apparently astonished. "Why, you've been telling us for dog's ages that you're our seniors."

Temple turned pink.

"Well, of course, we're a senior Form, in a sense. Still, by the rules of the school the Shell and Lower Forms are considered juniors, and we're below the Shell. Therefore—"

"Yes, I'll have a couple more tarts, thank you! Marmalade ones, for a change."

"Therefore, there's nothing against our going."

"Of course not," agreed Hazeldene. "I only wish you could come."

"Well, why can't we come?" asked Temple, somewhat warmly. "Look here, Vaseline, to put it plainly, we'd like to come."

"I'd like you to, too, like a shot; but, you see, I'm taking only Removites."

"But you could make an exception—"

"I wish I could, but it wouldn't do. Practically all the Remove are coming, and I can't march in with an invading army, you know. Thirty-five guests are enough for any dance."

"But the girls would like older fellows—better dancers to dance with."

"Shouldn't wonder. If Miss Primrose writes to me to that effect, of course I'll take you all like a shot," said Hazeldene blandly.

Temple, Dabney & Co. exchanged glances. They were strongly inclined to collar Hazeldene on the spot and wipe the floor with him.

"Now, look here, Hazeldene, old chap—I say, will you have some more tarts?"

"N-no, thanks—I think I've finished."

"Another ginger-pop?"

"No, thanks!"

"Now, old fellow, we'd like to come—"

"I'm afraid it can't be fixed," said Hazeldene, shaking his head solemnly. "But I'll tell you what I'll do," he went on, in a burst of generosity. "I'll tell you all about it when I get back."

And Hazeldene walked rather quickly out of the tuckshop before Temple could reply. He left the Fourth Formers speechless.

The Removite chuckled as he strolled across the Close. His chuckle died away as Ionides of the Sixth came by and stopped. The Greek was one of the worst-tempered fellows in Greyfriars, in spite of an outward polish of manner which he knew how to assume, and the juniors made it a point to give him as wide a berth as possible. But just now there was no chance of avoiding him, and to Hazeldene's surprise he had an agreeable smile on his olive face. The junior stopped.

"Ah, I wanted to speak to you!" said Ionides agreeably.

YOU'LL ENJOY EVERY MOMENT OF THE DANCE AT CLIFF HOUSE— ESPECIALLY WHEN A GREYFRIARS SENIOR ACTS AS WAITER!

"Yes," said Hazeldene, inwardly wondering at the senior's politeness. But the Greek's next words enlightened him.

"I hear you're going to a dance to-night, you youngsters."

"Yes, the Remove are all invited."

"Doubtless the invitation is open to seniors."

"No, only the Remove."

Ionides' eyes glittered.

"Are you quite sure of that?" he asked. "It might please me to look in for the dance. Is there any reason why I shouldn't?"

Hazeldene hesitated. If he took a senior in the party, Miss Primrose would probably make no objection; but it was understood that only juniors were to go. If Ionides thrust himself into the party, it would be in the worst of taste, but the Greek's look showed that Hazeldene would refuse at his peril.

"Well?" said Ionides, in a significant tone.

"I—I suppose you can do as you like, Ionides," said Hazeldene diplomatically.

"Good! Then I shall go—perhaps!"

And the Greek strode away. Hazeldene walked on moodily. He had not ventured to answer the Sixth Former as he had answered Temple, Dabney & Co.

Hazeldene started and looked up quickly as he received a slap on the shoulder.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" exclaimed Bob Cherry cheerfully. "Wherefore that pensive brow?"

"That cad Ionides! He says he's coming to the dance."

"Seniors aren't admitted."

"He's coming all the same."

"Is he?" said Bob Cherry grimly. "If he comes with us, we'll make things warm for him on the way. There'll be enough of us to eat him."

Hazeldene's face cleared, and he laughed.

"I hadn't thought of that," he said. "Of course, we can bump him into a ditch, accidentally, and muck up his clothes, and he'll have to come back."

But Ionides had thought of that. The Greek was far too cunning to place himself at the mercy of the juniors who detested him. He meant to go to the dance—but not in the Remove party. He intended to go alone, and in his unbounded conceit, he had no doubt that he would properly impress Miss Primrose and her pupils, and be quite the lion of the evening.

Fancy Dress!

MR. QUELCH, the master of the Remove, was a much-worried man that day. The excitement in his Form was very much to the detriment of lessons. He had not heard yet about the fancy dress ball at Cliff House, and he wondered what on earth was the matter with the Remove.

The juniors simply could not fix their thoughts upon their work, and impositions fell like hail. Glad enough was Mr. Quelch to dismiss his class, and glad enough was the class to be dismissed.

Mr. Quelch, looking somewhat heated, dropped into the Head's study after the Remove was dismissed. The Head wore a thoughtful expression.

"I cannot understand the Remove to-day," Mr. Quelch remarked. "There seems to be something going on in the Form."

The Head smiled.



Clara suddenly took hold of Wun Lung's pig-tail and gave it a jerk. There was a yell from the Chinese junior. But the pigtail didn't come off, and the girl realised that she was dealing with a real Chinaman!

"Ah, yes; then you have not heard! Miss Primrose has written to ask my permission for the Form to go over to Cliff House this evening. She is celebrating the opening of the new school with a dance in fancy dress, and I have consented to let the boys go. No doubt they are excited."

Mr. Quelch laughed.

"Miss Primrose has written me a very pleasant letter," said the Head. "She has been pleased by some idea the juniors had of giving her a welcome as she came to Cliff House yesterday. She is a very estimable lady, and I have special reasons for keeping on amicable terms—both because we shall be near neighbours, and because my sister is to be the second mistress at Cliff House. And I really think the little excursion will do the boys no harm."

"Certainly not!" said Mr. Quelch.

"So I have consented. The party will be an early one, as, of course, late hours would not be permissible. I shall walk over to Cliff House myself to bring them back to-night. Till then. I think I can trust them with Wharton. He will see that any exuberance is kept within bounds. You might as well give them a hint to that effect."

"I will certainly do so," said Mr. Quelch.

And he did. Harry Wharton received the hint dutifully. There were some wild spirits in the Remove, but Wharton had a firm character, and they knew that he was not to be trifled with.

Bulstrode was not to go—he was firm on that point. Harry never bore malice, but he knew that he could not trust Bulstrode, and he was inexorable on that. Hazeldene had charge of the list of guests, and he was quite willing to follow Harry's

lead in the matter. Bulstrode growled and stormed, but it was to no purpose.

The invited juniors were busy thinking about their costumes. The costumer's at Friardale had been raided, and everything he could furnish at such short notice was carried off. But when his stock was exhausted he could do no more. And there were not enough costumes to go round.

The Wharton Operatic and Dramatic Society possessed a considerable amount of "props" used in the productions, and these were brought to light at once. Study No. 1 had no difficulty in getting fixed. As for the rest, they had to knock up costumes for themselves if they could not hire them, and so the Remove was very busy.

The Upper Fourth looked on enviously—but it was good-natured envy. Temple, Dabney & Co., like decent fellows, came forward to help, and many articles were contributed by the Upper Fourth in the hour of need. Even the garb in which Temple himself played Hamlet in private theatricals was cheerfully lent to Frank Nugent.

Billy Bunter had declined Hazeldene's suggestion of going as the circus Fat Boy, though Hazeldene had pointed out that that would save him the trouble of wearing fancy dress.

Billy Bunter had once worn the costume of the Toreador in a semi-comic representation of "Carmen" given by the operatic society in the Remove; and Billy Bunter fancied himself in the character of the bold Escamillo. And when the costumes were brought out, Bunter plumped at once for that of the Toreador. It was in vain that Bob Cherry, who had an eye on that rig-out himself, remonstrated.

"You see, a little, round, fat animal isn't suited to a character like Il Remendado in 'Carmen,' or Leporello in 'Don Giovanni,' or Guru in 'Madame Butterfly.' What's the good of a fat snail like you going as a bullfighter?"

"I'm sorry to see such a lot of jealousy rampant in this study," said Bunter, with dignity. "I remember that when we were doing 'Carmen,' you didn't want me to sing the Toreador song, though it just suited my fine baritone. I'm surprised at you, Cherry, and I must say I'm shocked, too."

"You'll burst the costume, and then it won't be any use for future occasions."

"I shan't burst it! Look here, it goes on as easy as anything."

"Yes, before supper," said Bob dubiously. "But what about after?"

Billy Bunter did not deign to reply to that question. He dressed himself as the Toreador, and he made the fattest and shortest Toreador on record. But he was quite satisfied with himself, and, after all, that was the main point.

Bob Cherry satisfied himself with the uniform of a Spanish soldier, also belonging to the props of "Carmen." Harry Wharton looked very handsome in Elizabethan ruff and trunk hose.

Hurree Singh was a little exercised in his mind as to his character. Nugent suggested Uncle Tom—the proprietor of the celebrated Cabin—but the nabob explained that the niggerfulness of his esteemed complexion was not sufficient. It was finally arranged that the nabob should go as an Indian prince, and he ransacked his extensive wardrobe for gorgeous robes and blazing jewels.

Wun Lung, too, came into Study No. 1 for advice. The little Celestial was a difficult subject. The pigtail was in the way of making-up, and Bob Cherry's suggestion that he should cut it off

and grow another later on, was apparently not acceptable to the youth from the Flowery Land.

"Well, go as you are," Nugent suggested. "Everybody will think that you're a chap made up as a Chinaman, and they'll think the disguise excellent."

The little Celestial chuckled.

"Me savvy," he said, "Me tinkee good wheeze."

And when the time came to depart, Wun Lung, like Hurree Singh, dressed in his most gorgeous garb for the occasion. It was a numerous and merry party that set out from Greyfriars, with overcoats or raincoats on over their fancy dress.

Hazeldene looked over the party carefully to see that only the invited were there. He was somewhat puzzled to see no sign of Ionides.

"The beast has changed his mind, I suppose," he remarked.

Harry Wharton looked doubtful.

"That wouldn't be like Ionides."

"Well, he isn't here."

"More likely he doesn't want to walk with a lot of juniors," Ogilvy remarked. "He may be coming along later."

"Then we shan't be able to bump him in the ditch," said Bob Cherry regretfully. "I hope Miss Primrose will be down on him, that's all. March!"

They marched.

Great Preparations!

CLIFF HOUSE was in a blaze of light. From the windows the light shone out far over the shadowed sea, visible to the fishermen in the bay. Cliff House was en fete.

The building was large and well-planned. Round the handsome house were wide gardens, with pleasant paths. Fairy lights hung in the conservatory, and Chinese lanterns glimmered amongst the trees. It was a very mild and soft evening, and a breath of a pleasant south wind came over the sea. The large school-room had been prepared for the dance. Mr. Tripper, the dancing-teacher of Friardale, had had charge of the arrangements, and he had done his duty nobly. All was ready now, and Miss Primrose was ready to receive her guests.

That good lady was in a flutter a little. She was very much under the influence of Miss Locke, her henchwoman. Miss Locke was the sister of the Head of Greyfriars, and was well known at the school. She was a charming young lady, with advanced ideas. She had a theory that feminine society exercised a civilising influence upon boys—which was no doubt very true—and that masculine society was equally beneficial to girls, helping them to learn fortitude, courage, and frankness—masculine virtues which Miss Locke found somewhat lacking in her own sex.

Miss Primrose was aware that she was quite dependent upon Miss Locke for the management of the school, which was beyond her powers. She was, in addition, as fond of the girl as if she had been her own daughter—for Miss Locke had a winning way which was not to be resisted.

Miss Locke had arrived that day, and was ready to help the headmistress with the evening's entertainment. An orchestra had been hired from the nearest town, and it consisted of the inevitable piano, backed up by five or six instruments.

The girls, of course, were in a state of great excitement, though they tried not to appear so. They, one and all, blessed Miss Locke for guiding the ideas of the principal into the right path.

Miss Primrose had promised them a little celebration for the evening; but they had only looked forward to tea and seed cake, and no society but their own. To have that somewhat depressing treat changed for a dance in fancy dress delighted the girls of Cliff House.

And the fact that it was a masked ball added immensely to the excitement.

There was excited talking and laughing among the fair pupils of Miss Primrose, and more than one pair of eyes looked from the corner of the blind to see whether the Greyfriars juniors were coming.

Marjorie Hazeldene was looking forward to seeing her old friends from Greyfriars, her brother among the number. The calmest of all was Miss Primrose's German pupil, Fraulein Wilhelmina Limburger. She was a stout, fair-complexioned girl with flaxen hair, and a fat, good-natured face, and sleepy, blue eyes. Her placid German calm was so undisturbed by the approaching festivities that the volatile Clara longed to shake her.

"It is goot!" was all Wilhelmina replied to Marjorie's or Clara's remarks on the subject.

"But you like dancing, don't you, Wilhelmina?" asked Clara.

"Ja," said Wilhelmina, "it is goot. It makes you hungry."

"Hungry?" said Marjorie and Clara together.

"Ja," said Wilhelmina innocently. "And dere is a goot supper. Miss Primrose has been ferry careful to have a goot supper."

"Oh, my goodness!" said Clara. "Fancy thinking about the supper before the dance has even commenced!"

"It is a goot supper."

"How do you know?" demanded Clara.

"I've seen it," said Miss Limburger, with stolid German satisfaction. "It's goot, and there is plenty. I tink dere is one mistake that Miss Primrose make in te arrangements."

"And what's that?" demanded Marjorie.

"Dere are too many dances before te supper interval."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Hark!" exclaimed someone. "I can hear them."

"It's the boys!" said Clara. "How is my hair, Marjorie?"

"Beautiful, Clara!"

The Greyfriars juniors had indeed arrived.

Some of the girls peeped into the hall to see them. The juniors were in great force, and the peepers noted with satisfaction that there were likely to be more boys than girls at the dance. That would make it a pronounced success, from the feminine point of view.

Miss Primrose received the juniors in great style. A large room opening off the hall had been assigned to them, and there they removed their coats and caps, and changed their shoes.

Billy Bunter, to his great satisfaction, found that there were refreshments prepared for those who desired them, and, needless to say, he desired them. He was still busy satisfying the wants, real or imaginary, of the inner man, when a wail was heard from the big school-room, a preliminary canter, as Bob Cherry termed it, of the first violin.

"Buck up!" said Harry Wharton.

"Hold on, Harry!" said Bob Cherry.

"What's the matter?" asked Wharton, looking round.

"How do these trousers look?"

"Ripping! You expect a Spanish soldier's trousers to be baggy, of course."

"Ye-es; but not quite so baggy as these beastly things," said Bob Cherry, looking down rather ruefully at his legs. "The coat is a size too large, also."

"I'll pin it anywhere you like for you," said Skinner.

"Well, you might yank it in a bit across the shoulders," said Bob Cherry. "Pin it across—Ow! You clumsy ass! What are you stabbing me in the back for?"

"Ha, ha! Sorry; the pin slipped!"

"Oh, let it alone—Ow! Get off, you idiot!"

Bob Cherry swung round. He knew Skinner, and guessed how accidental those pinpricks were. He let out his left, and Skinner rolled on the floor.

It was Skinner's turn to yell, then.

"Order, order!" exclaimed Hazeldene.

"Oh, it's all right!" grinned Bob Cherry. "Skinner had one accident, and I've had another, that's all."

"You've nearly busted my jaw," groaned Skinner.

"Serve you jolly well right! Perhaps you won't be so funny next time. Will you pin this for me, Stott?"

"Thanks!" said Stott, moving away. "You're rather too free with your left-handers for me."

Nugent did the required pinning at last. Bob Cherry's clothes certainly looked two or three sizes too large for him, but otherwise, Nugent said, they fitted him well. With which Bob was forced to be comforted.

He was thinking, of course, of Marjorie. However, the fact that they were to be masked gave him courage.

Billy Bunter, with a smear of jam on his mouth, was giving himself some finishing touches before the glass. The little mask left most of his fat face open to view, and he scorned to take notice of a suggestion that he should put his head in a bag, or wear a fire-screen. He was humming a dance tune as he looked in the glass, with smug satisfaction at his supposed good looks.

"Take that greasy grin off your face!" said Bob Cherry, a little unreasonably. "I'd take the face off, too, if it belonged to me."

"I suppose you can't help being jealous about Marjorie and me," said Billy Bunter, with an air of dignity. "I always was a demon with the—"

Biff!

Bunter sat down suddenly, and Bob Cherry walked away. The latter was always "touchy" about Marjorie.

(Continued on the next page.)

**ROYAL
NAVY**

Boys may now enter between the ages of 15 and 17½ years. Full particulars are contained in the illustrated booklet:

"The Royal Navy

as a Career and How to Join It," which may be obtained on application to the Recruiting Staff Officer, R.N. & R.M. (N), 85, Whitehall, London, S.W.1, or at any Post Office.

When Billy Bunter gathered his dazed senses and rose, he was alone in the room. The merry strains of a popular waltz floated through the door, and showed him that the dance had begun. He rubbed his nose, which looked very red.

"The beast!" he murmured. "That's the worst of those big, bow-legged chaps—they always get frantically jealous of us good-looking, medium-sized fellows. It's not my fault how I look, I suppose, and I don't encourage the girls."

And Billy Bunter sniffed and moved off towards the ball-room with the easy, graceful motion which disrespectful Removites had compared to the rolling of a tub.

The Dance!

THE large school-room presented a scene of great animation.

Besides the boys and girls, there were some half a dozen grown-ups present, but these were mainly directing their efforts to make things go smoothly and add to the enjoyment of the young people.

Miss Primrose had allowed Harry Wharton to take her round once. In the garb of a courtier of Queen Bess, with the mask partly concealing his face, the captain of the Remove was not to be recognised as the lad Miss Penelope had read such a lecture to the previous day on the Friardale road for fighting Bulstrode.

Billy Bunter, in spite of the charm he was convinced he possessed for the fair sex, did not obtain partners easily.

It is true that the Toreador received many glances from all quarters, but he was too short-sighted to see with what smiles they were accompanied. Perhaps such a fat Toreador appeared remarkable to the girls of Cliff House; or perhaps the idea of a Toreador in a big pair of spectacles struck them as comic.

Billy Bunter rather prided himself upon his dancing, and he was anxious to show his Form-fellows what a perfect Don Juan he was. Unfortunately, the girls' programmes seemed singularly short of vacancies.

Although Bunter was careful to preserve a polite form of speech, his manner, if not his words, indicated that he considered that he was conferring a real favour upon any lady he honoured with a request to dance. His conceit received a number of rude shocks now, and by the time he had missed four or five dances, he began to think with yearning of the seclusion of the supper-room.

Miss Locke had an eye open for everything. The girl, in her quiet, unobtrusive way, was performing as many duties as half a dozen stewards. There was one of the Cliff House pupils who was likely to pair well with Billy Bunter, and this was Miss Wilhelmina Limburger.

The stout German girl was very good-tempered and good-natured, and her tastes were very like those of the fat junior. An introduction was effected, and Miss Limburger calmly appropriated Billy Bunter.

Bunter was glad enough to get a dance, if only to show the other fellows that he could do so; but, as a matter of fact, dancing fatigued the fat junior. Also, it fatigued Miss Wilhelmina Limburger, and she was glad of a rest.

Billy Bunter led her to a seat.

"Warm, isn't it?" he said.

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"I tink it is," assented Miss Limburger. "I tink I like an ice."

"May I fetch you one?" said Bunter.

"Ach! I tink so!"

Bunter rolled away and fetched the ice. Miss Limburger smiled sweetly, and announced that she would like another. Bunter went for it and brought it to her, and it followed the first. Miss Limburger then made the discovery that a third ice would be acceptable.

Bunter wanted to do the polite thing, which, of course, forbade him to desert his partner till she was claimed. The girl had the next dance empty, so she was not likely to be claimed, and Bunter could not plead an engagement. He was thinking of the endless ices to be had free, gratis, and for nothing, and feeling far from comfortable.

Bunter went for the third ice, and temptation overcame him in the vestibule, and he stopped to eat it. He was just finishing it with great enjoyment when he felt a tap on his arm. He started so suddenly that he dropped the glass, and it smashed to pieces.

"Oh, really!" exclaimed Bunter.

"Ach! You eats him yourself!" said Miss Limburger. "I tink you long time, and come for you, isn't it?"

Bunter turned crimson.

"Well, you see, I—I had a sudden faintness," he explained. "I'm a chap with a delicate constitution, and I can only keep up my strength by taking snacks."

"Tat is pad," said Miss Limburger sympathetically. "I tink I comes and takes snacks mit you."

And she slid her hand into Bunter's arm, and he had no choice but to walk her away to the refreshments. Still, it was something to get into the room. And being there before the others gave him a chance—or he thought it would. But it turned out otherwise.

Miss Limburger was a really dangerous rival for Billy Bunter in gastronomic feats, and she kept the fat junior so busy looking after her that he had no time to look after himself.

Suddenly it occurred to him that he was a ventriloquist. Miss Limburger was contentedly eating a pork-pie, and between munches telling Bunter what she would have next, when a sudden squeak came from beneath her chair.

If it was not a mouse, it was a very life-like imitation.

"Ach!" shrieked Miss Limburger, starting up.

Bunter blinked at her in well-simulated surprise.

"What's the matter?"

"Ach! Te mouse!"

"What mouse?"

Squeak, squeak, squeak!

Miss Limburger sprang upon her chair out of danger. But the squeaking still came to her ears. With a gasp, the German girl fled, leaving her supper unfinished. Squeak, squeak, squeak, followed her and haunted her till she disappeared.

Billy Bunter winked solemnly at the ceiling.

He called up one of the hired waiters from Friardale, who were in attendance in the supper-room, and with that gentleman's assistance, planned a supper that would fully compensate him for all the troubles he had gone through.

Miss Limburger joined Miss Primrose in the big school-room, which was filled with the strains of music and merry voices.

Miss Primrose was seated with several friends

round her, looking on at the enjoyment of the young people with beaming smiles.

The dance was a great success so far.

The shyness of the girls, and the bashfulness of the boys, had to a very great extent been overcome by the tact of Miss Locke, ably seconded by Marjorie and Harry Wharton, in her endeavours to make things go.

Nearly everybody was dancing, and every girl who cared to do so had a partner, and everyone was enjoying himself or herself thoroughly.

Some of the dancing on the part of the gentlemen was a little clumsy, perhaps; but the girls were patient.

Bob Cherry seemed to imagine at times that he was on the football field, making a desperate run for goal, and he had a weakness for regarding other people's feet as proper resting-places for his own. But for the mask which he fondly imagined concealed his identity, he would never have dared to dance at all.

As a matter of fact, he was perfectly well-known. Skinner remarked—out of Bob's hearing—that his feet would serve to identify him anywhere. And indeed Bob's feet were several times very much in evidence. Still, he was having a good time, and what he lacked in skill he made up in good temper and willingness to please.

A dance was ending, and Harry and Marjorie, and Bob and Clara, found themselves together, and sat down near a cluster of ferns a short distance from Miss Primrose, just as a new arrival entered the room.

Bob caught sight of him and uttered a low ejaculation, which caused Harry to look round.

"Ionides!"

Wharton's brows contracted a little. Of course, it was nothing to the Remove if a Sixth Former chose to be guilty of bad form; but Wharton felt it as reflecting upon Greyfriars.

"Confound him!" he murmured. "So he's come!"

"Yes, and not in fancy dress. I suppose he didn't know—or doesn't care. He looks as if he thought the place belonged to him!" growled Bob Cherry.

The Amateur Waiter!

IONIDES certainly did look quite satisfied with himself. Whether he had known or not that it was a fancy dress affair, he had not taken the trouble to come in costume. He was in ordinary evening dress, and it could not be denied that he looked elegant.

Some of the girls glanced at him with approval—a fact that was not lost on the juniors, and which did not make their feelings any the more pleasant towards the cad of the Sixth.

Ionides came up to where Miss Primrose sat, after a glance about the room. Although he seemed to regard himself as monarch of all he surveyed, he condescended to pay his respects to his hostess.

But Miss Primrose was far from observing that she was receiving a distinguished guest.

All the guests at the dance were in fancy dress, and Miss Primrose, seeing a young man in ordinary evening clothes advancing towards her, fell into the excusable error that it was one of the hired waiters from Friardale. The waiters were the only ones there in dress clothes, and so the mistake was quite excusable. Miss Primrose was a trifle short-sighted, and she did not look very closely at the Greek.

"You may bring me an ice," she said.

Ionides stared a little. He had no objection to getting an ice for his hostess, but Miss Primrose's tone was hardly what he would have expected.

However, as the good lady turned away her head and began to speak to Miss Limburger, he turned a little pink and moved away to obey.

Bob Cherry gripped Harry Wharton's arm.

"Did you hear that, Harry?"

"No. What was it?"

"Miss Primrose takes him for a waiter."

"My hat! Ha, ha, ha!"

The juniors looked on with great interest as Heracles Ionides reappeared with the ice, which he carried very gingerly.

"Ahem! Madam, you requested—"

Miss Primrose turned her head towards him.

"Ah, yes, my ice! Thank you."

"I have the pleasure—"



Billy Bunter was just finishing the ice for Miss Limburger when he felt a tap on the arm. He started so suddenly that he dropped the glass and it smashed to pieces. "Ach!" said Miss Limburger. "You eat him yourself!"

"Yes, thank you. You may go."

"Permit me to—"

"You may fetch me an ice for this young lady."

"If you will permit me to—"

"Yes, do as I tell you."

Ionides' teeth came together hard; but he obeyed. He brought the second ice for Fraulein Wilhelmina, who accepted it with a look at him, only murmuring:

"Thank you!"

The next dance was beginning now, and the couples were taking their places. The Greek was red with anger. He wanted to introduce himself to Miss Primrose, but Miss Locke seated herself beside the principal and engaged her in conversation.

Ionides made almost an appealing gesture to her. Miss Locke did not acknowledge him.

She had a faint remembrance of having seen the Greek at Greyfriars, but that was all. As she knew seniors were not invited to the dance, she did not know what to make of Ionides' presence here, and wasn't inclined to come to his help. His air of superiority was quite enough to make Miss Locke ignore him.

It was the last dance before the interval, and the juniors and girls enjoyed it immensely, while the Greek stood looking on with glaring eyes.

When it was over a general move was made to the refreshment-room.

Billy Bunter was there, half-way through a tremendous feed, and too busy even to look up when the rest came in.

Bob Cherry, to his great delight, found himself in possession of Marjorie. He had not planned it, but it had worked out like that.

Harry was with Clara, and that cheerful girl was prattling away at express speed on every subject under the sun. The masks were removed at supper, and Clara gave a little shriek of surprise on discovering that the handsome Elizabethan courtier was the youth who had been pommelling Bulstrode on the Friardale road the previous afternoon.

Wharton coloured as he saw that he was recognised.

"Don't give me away to Miss Primrose," he said. "You see, I was forced into that row against my will, really."

"And Miss Primrose lectured you severely."

"Yes—didn't she? If she had known the facts—"

"What were they?"

Wharton hesitated; but Bob Cherry, who had brought Marjorie to the same table, chimed in.

"The other chap was going to chuck fireworks to scare you, and Wharton stopped him."

"How good of you!" said Clara, beaming. "Do you know, I thought you were rather a nice boy, though you did look like a hooligan with dust on your face and one of your eyes closed up. Were you much hurt?"

"Not a bit."

"Weren't you surprised to find it was I?" asked Bob Cherry, looking bashfully at Marjorie when he was unmasked.

Marjorie smiled.

"I had a suspicion whom it was," she said.

"I knew you all the time," said Bob. "As a matter of fact, I knew Miss Clara, too, from seeing her yesterday. By Jove! There's Ionides again."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The juniors subdued their laughter, but they could not quite help it.

Heracles Ionides was passing them with two plates full of sandwiches to place on a table, having been directed by Miss Primrose to do so.

The Greek was puzzled and angry.

Miss Primrose's mistake had not yet dawned on him, but he could not quite make her out. He had had no opportunity at all of introducing himself, being kept too busy on the guests.

The juniors, naturally, were not slow to enter into the spirit of the thing. Orders rained on Ionides from all sides.

"Here, my man," said Nugent, "bring me some ginger-beer—sharp!"

Ionides, scarcely believing his ears, glared at him.

"Buck up, my man—make yourself useful!"

"You let my waiter alone!" exclaimed Bob Cherry. "This chap is looking after me. Here, Johnny, here's a tanner for you. You stick to this table."

"Ah!" muttered the Greek, livid with rage.

"I will—I will make you smart!"

"Don't bother about that," said Bob Cherry coolly; "look smart yourself. I suppose you're being paid for this?"

Ionides almost choked.

"Paid! What do you mean?"

"I suppose you're not waiting at table for nothing?" said Bob innocently. "Anyway, buck up and get some sandwiches."

"You—you—"

"Deaf? Sandwiches—I said sandwiches!"

Ionides hurried away. He could not trust himself near Bob Cherry, or he would have thrown etiquette to the winds and hurled himself upon the junior in full sight of Miss Primrose and her guests.

Miss Penelope's mistake dawned upon him at last, and the humiliation of it made his cheeks burn with rage.

He made his way to the hostess, with the intention of explaining, but he found her busy. He insisted upon attracting her attention, however.

"Yes, my good man, what do you want?" asked Miss Primrose, surprised and annoyed. "Please go and wait on my guests."

"Ah! You think—you think—" The Greek choked with fury.

Miss Primrose looked alarmed.

"Dear me! The dreadful man is intoxicated!" she murmured. "There is nothing stronger than orange wine in the place, yet—"

"Madam, I—you—I—"



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"He must have brought spirits with him," said the scandalised Miss Primrose. "I—I shall certainly complain to Mr. Sweet."

The Greek gritted his teeth.

"Madam——"

"Go at once! Do you not see that people are observing you?" said Miss Primrose.

Ionides was stuttering with rage. He seemed to be about to lose control of his temper entirely, and in that case the juniors would have been only too glad to throw him out.

He was saved from that by the sight of the Head advancing to the spot with Miss Locke. Dr. Locke had accepted Miss Primrose's invitation, being, as a matter of fact, somewhat uneasy as to the behaviour of thirty-five Removites taken out of his immediate care. He started as he saw the Greek.

"Ionides! What are you doing here?"

"I—I came——"

"I understood that only juniors were invited by Miss Primrose."

Miss Primrose almost fainted.

"Dr. Locke, is—is this one of your boys?"

"Yes, Miss Primrose, a senior of the Sixth Form. I understood——"

"Good gracious! I took him for a waiter!"

"Ha, ha! I mean—ahem! Ionides, you have yourself to thank for this. I presume your coming here was due to some misunderstanding, but you should have been more careful. You had better retire at once."

And Ionides retired. He caught the laughing looks of the juniors turned upon him, and hardly restrained his rage till he was safe in the silence of the garden. There he gave free rein to his anger, and hissed out strong expressions in Greek till he was somewhat calmed.

Bob Cherry's Little Joke!

HARRY WHARTON restrained his laughter as well as he could. Clara was laughing, too, and Marjorie could not subdue a smile. Bob Cherry would have given worlds to jump up and execute a war-dance in the middle of the room.

"Oh, it was too gorgeous!" he murmured. "How are the mighty fallen! Fancy Ionides being taken for a common or garden waiter. Ha, ha, ha!"

"Not much of a compliment to the waiters!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Me tinkee me findes loom hele."

It was the voice of Wun Lung, the Chinese. He found room at a table next to Wharton's, with a sunny-faced girl whom Clara immediately addressed as Missy.

Marjorie knew Wun Lung, of course, but to the rest he was a stranger, and there was not one who did not think that his Chinese aspect was a disguise got up for the occasion.

"Isn't it marvellous?" said Clara, looking at him.

"What's marvellous?" asked Wharton.

"Why, his make-up. He speaks just like a Chinaman, too. I danced with him, and if it had not been a fancy dress ball, you know, I should have taken him for a real Chinaman."

Bob Cherry grinned.

"He's been taken for a real Chinaman before now," he remarked.

"Me tinkee Bob Chelly jokee," said Wun Lung, looking round. "Me leal Chinese."

Clara clasped her hands ecstatically.

"Isn't it wonderful?"

"Amazing!" said Bob Cherry. "You wouldn't think how well that pigtail is fixed on, too. It would be a joke to jerk it off!"

"My goodness, how funny!"

"Me leal Chinese," said Wun Lung. "No savvy. No disguise. Me leal."

"Oh, come off!" said Bob Cherry. "Don't keep it up with us, you know."

"No savvy."

Wun Lung turned his head away to look after his partner.

Bob Cherry whispered to Clara:

"Fancy his keeping it up like that!"

"Yes; he deserves to have his pigtail pulled off," said that lively young lady, with a longing glance at that ornament on Wun Lung's head.

"Give it just a jerk—it's close to you—and watch results."

Clara hesitated. But the spirit of mischief was too strong for her, and she suddenly took hold of the pigtail and gave it a sharp jerk.

There was a yell from Wun Lung.

The pigtail was firmly attached to his head, having grown there, and the jerk on it hurt. He jumped and dropped his cup into the saucer. Then he looked round, his almond eyes wide open, at the dismayed Clara.

"Me hurtee. Ow!"

Clara seemed unable to believe her eyes.

So far from coming off, the pigtail had proved its genuineness by standing the strain, and she realised that she was dealing with a real Chinaman.

"Oh dear!"

Wun Lung smiled sweetly.

"Only jokee," he said. "Allee light. Me savvy."

And he turned away peaceably enough. Clara gave Bob Cherry a reproachful look. Bob seemed as if he were on the verge of apoplexy.

A movement was being made for the dancing-room again. The second half, as Bob Cherry termed it, was even more animated and enjoyable than the first, all the remains of shyness and constraint having passed away.

The evening went all too quickly. Billy Bunter did not reappear, however. He had eaten of the supper not wisely, but too well, and he felt much too sleepy to seek the crowded room again. Instead of that, he wandered out into the conservatory, found a comfortable seat, and went to sleep.

His musical snore was the only sound heard in the conservatory, till two young people seated themselves close at hand. Bunter's snore was for the moment suspended, and they did not observe him in the dusky light.

"No, I won't forgive you," said Clara, "and I won't have any chocolates."

"But it was only a joke!" pleaded Bob Cherry.

"The poor boy was hurt," said Miss Clara. "Besides, it was silly!"

Bob Cherry rubbed his chin. His little joke had been quite a harmless one, but he felt that perhaps it had been more suitable for boys than for girls.

"How would you like to have your hair pulled?" said Clara severely.

"You can pull my hair if you like," said Bob Cherry. "Pull it as hard as you like and call it square."

Clara broke into an irrepressible ripple of laughter at the scheme for setting the matter right.

Sno-o-o-ore!

The girl started.

"My goodness! There must be some animal in the ferns!"

Bob Cherry pushed through the ferns, and uttered an exclamation.

There was Billy Bunter in a seat on the other side, leaning back with his mouth wide open, snoring away as if for a wager.

Bob Cherry gave a sniff of disgust.

"It's only Bunter!"

Clara's laugh rippled again. Bob Cherry took a chunk of chocolate from a packet.

"Shall I?" he asked.

"He trod on my toe," said Clara, "and tore my sash! He's a conceited fellow!"

Taking this as permission, Bob Cherry dropped the chocolate into Billy Bunter's mouth, and stepped back quickly behind the ferns.

"Br-r-r! Ow-w-w-w! Gr-r-r!"

"Let's go!" whispered Clara hurriedly.

They vanished. Billy Bunter put his spectacles straight, and came peering round; but he found no one. Bob Cherry and Clara, the best of friends now, walked off together, and the fat junior was left grumbling alone. But he ate the chocolate!

The enjoyable evening was drawing to a close now. The last waltz was danced, and the last strains of the band died away, and then the Greyfriars juniors took their leave.

"What a beautiful evening!" said Marjorie to Clara, after the guests were gone. "Hasn't it been lovely?"

"Splendid!" said Clara ecstatically.

Similar opinions were being exchanged by the Greyfriars juniors as they walked home, following the stately form of the Head.

"Ripping!" said Bob Cherry. "I never thought an evening spent with girls could be half so ripping!"

"Yes, it was ripping!" said Harry Wharton. "We shall have to return the compliment some time—somehow."

And the chums agreed. They marched home and turned in, somewhat tired, but quite happy, after their evening of going gay.

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(Continued from page 27.)

Herries, in his riotous anger, knocked Levison clean off his feet with a sledgehammer blow.

The cads of the Fourth were only getting their just deserts, and no one had a grain of sympathy to waste on them.

Mellish made no sort of stand whatever against Dick Brooke. His fists lashed the air wildly, and shortly afterwards he was on his back, groaning as if his last hour had come.

Some time later, a couple of tottering, weary, specimens of humanity crawled in at the gates of St. Jim's. Their faces were pictures; their clothes were dusty and dishevelled, and they had come to realise the truth of the old saying that the way of transgressors is hard.

After the nasty reverse he had sustained, George Herries might have been excused for throwing up any idea of future public performances.

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But eventually Herries won them over, with the result that a fine entertainment was given on the following Saturday.

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