

THE HORSE HUNTERS and THE VOICE OF THE TEMPTER
GRIPPING SCHOOL STORIES INSIDE.

The **GEM** 2^D

"MY HAT!"—A humorous moment in "THE ST. JIM'S SURPRISE PACKET!"—this week's full-of-fun yarn of Tom Merry & Co.





Blake Answers Back!

Jack Blake's here to answer your letters and deal with your queries. Write to him c/o The GEM, Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4. Be as candid as you like—Jack Blake likes a plain speaker, being by nature a John Blunt himself! But keep your letter SHORT, and enclose if possible a photo of yourself for reproduction on this page. No photos can be returned and no replies given by post.

L. P., of Perth, writes:

What's all this about aeroplanes being fitted with wireless altimeters with which pilots can tell exactly how high they are over the sea when they are flying over mountains?

ANSWER: *This sounds like a conundrum. How high is the Eiffel Tower if the policeman (gendarme) at the base is a little chap with a ginger moustache? Seriously, though, the old altimeters gave the height above sea level, but the new ones indicate the height of the plane over the mountains or whatever it is the plane is flying over.*

"Chimp," of Luton, writes:

Well, I thought I would drop you a line—not that I think much of your Answers Back! You seem too jolly eager to take a rise out of chaps. I expect you'll try to be smart at my expense, so here goes before you begin: Munkeynuts to you!

ANSWER: *Well, like George Robey, I mean ter say! Jolly decent of you to write, though you seem to be in a snorter of a mood. Before I attempt to compete with you in rudery, will you let me know what munkeynuts are? I asked a pet monkey kept by an old lady in Rylcombe, but he said he wouldn't know. (He's quite a well-educated monkey—can spell and all that, too!)*

"Befogged," of Beaconsfield, writes:

In an American film a character said he would see his friend in the early black. Later he told somebody not to beat up the chops when the pounders came. Then he said he was a skin-beater in a swing band, and that he was going to put the twister in the slammer and trilly. Finally he said he was whipped up. As man to man, what on earth did he mean?

ANSWER: *As man to man, I couldn't tell you. But Buck Finn, the American member of the Shell, helped me out. Apparently the guy in question was using some of the latest American slang. By the early black he meant the evening. To beat up the chops is to be too talkative, and the pounders are the police. A skin-beater is a drummer. To put the twister in the slammer and trilly is to put the key in the door and depart. When you are whipped up you are all in. Exhausted. All washed up, Yeah! I guess I'm foaming at the mouth, too! Boy, fetch me an ice-cream soda!*

M.G.B., of Folkestone, writes:

I want to know what year it was Nelson lost the Battle of Trafalgar. And don't stall. It's for a spelling bee. I'm a Celt.

ANSWER: *Let's get this clear. What do I*

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,613

have to spell? I'll start with Trafalgar—T R A F A L G A R. Get it? And Nelson didn't lose it—he won it in 1805. W O N—won. Get it? I'm Yorkshire

"Football Fan," of Birmingham, writes:

Here is a test case. In the middle of a football match between Reds and Blues, a British war-plane flying overhead accidentally drops a live bomb on the Reds' goal. The bomb explodes, blowing the goal to smithereens, but leaving the goalkeeper unharmed. At the precise moment of the explosion the Blues' centre-forward shoots, and the ball passes close to the goalkeeper's right hand, through the space formerly occupied by the net. Is it a goal?

ANSWER: *It's more than a goal, I should say. It's an absolute miracle! Of course, the correct procedure is for the ref to allow the goal, fill in the hole, erect new goalposts, and carry on as though nothing had happened. If there should be an earthquake, and players disappear into the earth, the referee might allow substitutes, perhaps.*

"Proud Percy," of Felixstowe, writes:

You will be pleased to hear from me, because I am rather a hero. The other day I was crossing a bridge over a river when I saw a boy struggling in the water. I shouted to a man who was looking on, and he dived in and saved the boy. I felt very proud. Sorry I haven't a picture of myself, but perhaps you will send your cameraman?

ANSWER: *Gosh, it's just too bad about the picture! Your dimpled dial would be a decoration on any roll of honour, I should think. It was terrifically heroic of you to shout at the gallant rescuer, giving him the opportunity of covering himself with wetness and you with glory. The cameraman is coming as fast as a train can carry him. He will arrive on February 29th!*

"Two-Fisted Joe," of Hove, Sussex, writes:

One more crack about Sussex and Sussex villages and I'll come to St. Jim's and dot you right on the nose. Don't worry—I'll find it! That's flat!

ANSWER: *To begin with, I'm not sure whether you mean you will find St. Jim's or my nose. In any case, you will find something you won't expect—a packet of trouble! Maybe it's your nose that will be flat!*

SCHOOLBOY RIVALRY, RAGGING, AND JAPING ARE THE HIGHLIGHTS OF THIS SPARKLING LONG ST. JIM'S STORY.



The ST. JIM'S SURPRISE PACKET!

"By Jove! I'll wake him up!" exclaimed Lowther. But just as he bent over Albert Adolphus the new boy yawned and sat up suddenly. The top of his head came into violent contact with Lowther's chin, and the Shell fellow let out a fearful howl. "Oh! Ow! Yah! Oh!"

CHAPTER 1.

The Rivals of St. Jim's!

"QUIET, deah boys!"

"Shush!"

"Weally, Blake—"

"Dry up, you ass!" said Jack Blake, in a fierce whisper.

"Sit on his head, somebody!" murmured Monty Lowther.

"Weally, Lowthah—"

Six distinct and withering glares were fixed upon Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, the ornament of the Fourth Form at St. Jim's.

It was a critical moment.

The seven heroes of the School House at St. Jim's were on the war-path—Tom Merry, Manners, and Lowther of the Shell, and Blake, Herries, Digby, and Arthur Augustus D'Arcy of the Fourth.

They were approaching the woodshed on tiptoe.

Within the woodshed

could be heard the sound of voices. Figgins & Co. of the New House were there. That secluded spot had been chosen for a rehearsal of the New House Junior Amateur Dramatic Society.

Figgins & Co. had selected that retired quarter in the fond hope that there would be no interruption to the important business of rehearsing the new play which was shortly to take St. Jim's by storm.

But the enemy was at the gate, so to speak.

The School House party intended to interrupt the rehearsal—with emphasis. They were close

up to the woodshed when Arthur Augustus felt called upon to warn his comrades to keep quiet.

The warning was really not needed; and it had the disadvantage of being audible inside the woodshed as well as outside.

Arthur Augustus had not considered that trifling point.

From within the woodshed Kerr's voice came—in a speech which formed part of the play

Who is Albert Adolphus Walker, the freak newcomer to St. Jim's? He's a pain in the neck to the School House; but he's the hero of the hour to the New House!

By

MARTIN CLIFFORD

entitled "The New Boy"—a thrilling drama of school life.

"They've heard us now!" muttered Tom Merry, after a pause.

"They have pwobably heard Blake," said Arthur Augustus. "It is vevy weckless to jaw, Blake, when we are twyin' to take the enemy by surprisew."

"Shurrup!" murmured Manners.

"Weally, Mannahs—"

"Why didn't you bring a gag for Gussy, Blake, you ass?" said Tom Merry. "Listen! They can't have heard us. Kerr's spouting!"

The voice of George Francis Kerr was still going on. Apparently the rehearsers were too busy to hear the muttering voices outside.

"All serene!" whispered Tom Merry. "They haven't heard. Now, not a word till I get the door open, and then rush in and mop them up."

The juniors tiptoed onward, closer and closer to the door of the woodshed. Tom Merry reached the door and put his finger on the handle. He turned and made a sign to his followers.

"Ready?"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Follow your leader!"

Tom Merry threw the door open and rushed in. Blake & Co. dashed after him at top speed. The School House juniors burst into the woodshed like a hurricane.

But Tom Merry, as he rushed in, caught his foot in a cord stretched across the doorway, and staggered and fell headlong.

Before his followers even knew he had fallen, they were stumbling over him and rolling right and left.

"Yah! Oh!"

"Bai Jove!"

"Wow-ow!"

"Sock it to 'em!" roared George Figgins.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The sprawling juniors of the School House were in no condition for defence. As they sprawled, the New House fellows piled on them.

The fallen juniors had no chance of getting up. They hardly knew what was happening before the New House rehearsers were sitting on them and pinning them down. There were only six of the New House, and there were seven of the invaders; but the latter were at a hopeless disadvantage.

Figgins' lengthy form was hurled upon D'Arcy and Digby, and he planted a knee in either back. They wriggled under him frantically, but Figgy's sinewy knees were not to be shifted.

"Oh crumbs!" gasped Tom Merry, collapsing under Redfern's weight. "Get off my neck! Ow!"

Blake struggled furiously, but in vain, under Fatty Wynn. Wynn's weight was more than equal to keeping him flattened on the floor.

"Dear little innocent children!" chortled Figgins. "They didn't know we heard them prattling outside."

"Ha, ha, ha!" loudly roared the N.H.J.A.D.S., in chorus.

"They didn't guess that we let Kerr go on spouting to make 'em think we were going to be caught napping—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"While we tied the cord across for the sweet little unsuspecting dears to fall over."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Gwoogh! Blake, you ass, you see that you have mucked up the whole affair!" gasped Arthur

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,613.

Augustus. "I warned you to be quiet, you wemembah!"

"Wait till I get up!" said Blake sulphurously. "Wait till this porpoise gets off my back, and I'll squash you, Gussy! I'll rub your nose on the floor, you frabjous, chortling, burbling dummy!"

"Weally, Blake—"

Figgins reached out to the cord, jerked it up, and looped one end round Arthur Augustus' arm, and drew it tight. Then he curled it round Dig's arm, and knotted it. The two juniors, being tied together by their arms, were helpless, and Figgins was able to rise.

D'Arcy and Digby wriggled up into a sitting position, breathing wrath.

"Welease me, you wottahs!" shouted Arthur Augustus.

Figgins chuckled, and looped the cord round arm after arm among the helpless School House party, knotting it each time.

By the time he had finished, Tom Merry & Co. were tied in a confused bunch, unable to resist, and unable even to struggle to their feet. They sat and gasped and glared, while the New House juniors roared with laughter.

"This is where we smile!" grinned Figgins.

And the New House smiled loudly.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

CHAPTER 2.

In Black and White!

TOM MERRY & CO. glared.

They could do nothing else. The tables had been completely turned upon the surprise party.

Figgins of the Fourth felt in his pocket and drew out a fountain-pen.

The prisoners of war stared at that proceeding. "Got a sheet of paper, anybody?" asked Figgins.

"Here you are," said Kerr. He took out his pocket-book.

"Good! Now, Tom Merry, it's up to you!"

"What are you driving at, you New House fathead?" growled the captain of the Shell.

Tom Merry's eyes wandered for a moment past Figgins to the open doorway. In the distance he spotted a School House junior, who was glancing curiously towards the woodshed.

It was Cardew of the Fourth.

Tom could see that Cardew had noted the state of affairs. Cardew at once disappeared round the building.

Tom Merry did not give a sign of having seen him, and the New House fellows, having their backs to the doorway, naturally had not noticed him.

Tom wondered whether Cardew had gone to call the School House to the rescue. If so, the tables might be turned once more.

Figgins, grinning, held out the pocket-book and the fountain-pen to the captain of the Shell.

"Write!" he commanded.

"Eh? What do you want me to write?" growled Tom.

"To dictation. Take the pen!"

"Rats!"

"Shall I pull his cars?" asked Fatty Wynn.

"You fat bounder—"

"Never mind! I'll write, and Tommy can sign it!" grinned Figgins. "They're all going to sign it, and we're going to stick it up in the Common-room in the New House—a confession of

defeat, you know. Now!" Figgins rubbed his chin thoughtfully, and began to write, reading aloud as he wrote.

The New House juniors chortled, and Tom Merry & Co. glared, as Figgins drew up the precious document as follows:

"NOTICE!

"We hereby confess that we are a set of silly asses, and that we have been licked to the wide, and that our silly old House can't keep its end up."

"There!" said Figgins, holding up the page detached from the pocket-book. "You fellows will sign that one after another!"

"Bravo!" chorused the New House party in great delight. This idea of Figgins was really a corker. With that document, signed by Tom Merry & Co., pinned up in the New House, it could be taken as established that the New House was Cuck House of St. Jim's, and that the rival House was nowhere. It would be a glorious triumph for Figgins & Co.

"Sign!" chuckled Redfern.

"Sign!" yelled the New House, in chorus.

"Rats!"

"Never!"

"Go and eat coke!"

"Yaas, wathah! I wefuse to do anythin' of the sort, Figgins! I wegard the mere suggestion as dewogatory to my dig!"

"Awfully sorry, but you've got to sign!" remarked Figgins. "We'll see if we can persuade you. There's some tar in the bucket, Reddy! Get the brush!"

Redfern fetched the tar-brush.

"Now paint Tommy's face till he signs the paper, and then serve the other bounders the same!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Tom Merry squirmed away from the grinning Redfern.

"You horrid rotter! Keep off——"

"Bai Jove! You feahful wuffians——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Prefer to sign?" grinned Redfern, flourishing the tar-brush within an inch of Tom Merry's nose.

"No!" yelled Tom.

"Tar him! Ha, ha, ha!"

The New House juniors yelled with laughter. But before Reddy could get to work with the tar-brush there was a sudden rush of feet outside.

Figgins gave a shout.

"Look out! School House cads!"

"Rescue!" roared Blake.

"Wescue, deah boys!"

Cardew, Levison, and Clive of the Fourth came in with a rush, and after them Julian and Kerruish, Talbot and Kangaroo, Gore, Glyn, and Dane, and Reilly and Hammond, and a crowd more of the School House.

They simply swarmed into the woodshed.

In a moment the tables were turned.

Figgins & Co. were hopelessly outnumbered. They were pitched right and left. Figgins and Kerr escaped by the door, and the rest bolted from the window, and in less than a minute the woodshed was clear of the New House fellows.

"Bai Jove! I'm awfully obliged to you, you chaps!" gasped Arthur Augustus. "Pway untie this wotten wope, Levison, deah boy!"

The prisoners were released.

Tom Merry groped on the floor, searching for

the paper that was still unsigned. His eyes were dancing.

"Dropped somethin'?" asked Cardew.

"No. Figgins has!"

Tom Merry caught up the leaf from Kerr's pocket-book. It had been trampled on, and was considerably soiled. Tom held it up.

"They were going to make us sign that!" he said.

"By gud! It's lucky I spotted you here, and called the fellows!" grinned Cardew. "The New House would never have let us forget that!"

"And we won't let the New House forget it!" chuckled Tom Merry. "It's not signed, and it's in Figgy's fist! Everybody knows Figgy's hand. That's a New House confession of defeat, as it stands——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

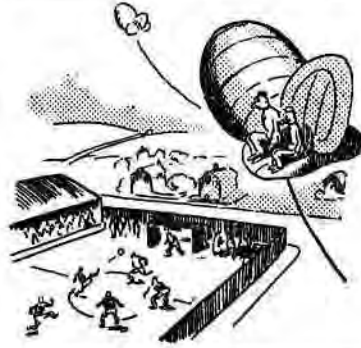
"And we'll stick it up in the School House—just as those rotters intended to do——"

"Yaas, wathah! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

In great triumph the School House juniors bore that precious paper away to their House.

A few minutes later it was pinned on the wall in the Junior Common-room, and fellows came



"Good idea these barrage balloons, Bill!"

Half-a-crown has been awarded to C. Holland, 14, Durell Road, Dagenham, Essex.

in to read it. The news of it spread far and wide, and even seniors looked into the junior quarters to glance at it.

As the notice stood, it was an undeniable confession of defeat, and the School House fellows rejoiced over it.

CHAPTER 3.

Down on Figgins!

"FATHEAD!"

"Ass!"

"Duffer!"

Those plain remarks, and many more of the same kind, greeted George Figgins as he came into the Common-room in the New House that evening.

The trophy in the School House was the cause.

Every fellow in the New House knew that that confession in Figgins' hand was being gloated over in the rival House. And, naturally, they were exasperated.

Figgins glared at his mutinous followers. Figgins was exasperated, too, by the use Tom Merry & Co. had made of his document. But, as Figgins was leader, Figgins had to bear the blame.

"You—you chortling asses!" said Figgins

wrathfully. "It was a jolly good idea, getting out that confession!"

"Fathead!"

"Figgins has let the House fairly down!" said Thompson of the Shell. "They're making out over the way that it's a confession of defeat, and that Figgins wrote it on his own accord from regard for the truth——"

"Figgins wrote it of his own accord, right enough," said Owen. "I saw him."

"It was for them to sign!" yelled Figgins.

"Well, they didn't sign it!"

"It will have to be got back somehow!" growled French of the Shell. "Otherwise we want a new leader in this House!"

"Yes, rather!" chimed in Diggs. "Figgins is played out! Let's have a new election!"

"Kerr's the man!" said Pratt. "Kerr's got more brain to the inch than Figgins has to the yard. Kerr——Yah! Oh! Leggo my nose, Kerr, you beast!"

Kerr, somewhat ungratefully, had taken Pratt's nose between finger and thumb, and his unfortunate backer yelled with anguish.

"You shut up!" said Kerr, as he released Pratt's nose at last. "Figgins is junior captain of the New House, and the best man for the job!"

"Yow-ow-ow! I'll pulverise you!" roared Pratt.

The next two or three minutes were very busy. At the end of them Kerr dabbed his nose with his handkerchief, and Pratt retired to a bathroom to bathe his eye.

But the chorus of denunciation went on unchecked, though no one, after Pratt's experience, ventured to suggest Kerr as a new junior skipper.

Figgins was very much inclined to run amok among his mutinous followers, but he retired from the Common-room instead, with his faithful chums, leaving the New House juniors still excitedly discussing the matter.

Figgins looked very gloomy and restive as he came into his study.

Kerr and Fatty Wynn were sympathetic.

"Silly asses!" growled Figgins. "How can I help it? We were taken by surprise when Cardew and that lot dropped on us!"

"The chaps say a leader oughtn't to be taken by surprise," Fatty Wynn remarked, in a reflective sort of way.

Figgins glared at him.

"So you're joining in the chorus!" he exclaimed. "Perhaps you'd like to set up as skipper, then? You're welcome to the job!"

"No, I'm backing you up, old chap," said Fatty Wynn placidly. "Still, it was a bloomer your writing out that paper, and it's no wonder the fellows are wild. We shall never hear the end of it."

"That's so," agreed Kerr. "It's a regular score for the School House. We've got to get it back somehow."

"They'll take jolly good care of it!" said Fatty Wynn.

"I'm going to get it back, of course," said Figgins. "I'm going to get it somehow, after lights out."

George Figgins was frowning darkly over his prep that evening. It was up to him to recover that unfortunate document unless his prestige was to be lost for ever; but he knew that it would not be an easy task.

When the New House juniors went to bed Figgins had the pleasure of listening to a running fire of remarks in the Fourth Form dormitory.

He listened to them with burning ears, but

without speaking. It was not till long after lights out that the New House Fourth ceased to discuss Figgins' awful bloomer. But sleep descended upon the dormitory at last—on all but Figgins and Kerr. Fatty Wynn was sleeping the sleep of the just; but Kerr had remained awake. He knew that Figgins was not sleeping. And when George Figgins, at half-past ten, slipped out of bed, Kerr spoke in a whisper:

"Figgy! That you?"

"Yes."

"You're really going?"

"Of course I am!" growled Figgins.

"You won't be able to get into the School House."

"Easy enough. I can open the catch of the Common-room window with my knife. I'm going to try, anyway."

"I'll come with you," said Kerr.

"Right-ho! You can help me up!"

The two juniors dressed quietly and slipped out of the dormitory. Very cautiously they dropped from a window at the back of the House and scudded away through the darkness towards the School House.

CHAPTER 4.

A Fair Catch!

"I'VE been thinkin'——"

Cardew of the Fourth made that remark as he rose after finishing his prep in Study No. 9 in the School House.

Clive and Levison had already finished, but Levison was still busy, his minor having brought his books to the study for assistance.

Frank Levison was diving deep into the mysteries of Eutropius under his major's guidance.

"I hear that they're awfully wild in the New House about that giddy document," went on Cardew.

"I fancy they will scalp Figgins," said Clive, with a laugh. "Poor old Figgy! Always putting his foot in it!"

"They will want to get that paper back," said Cardew.

"Yes, rather!"

"Doesn't it strike you, then, that they'll try?"

"I don't see how they can, unless they burgle the House after lights out," said Levison, looking up.

"Well, that's what I should do in Figgins' place," said Cardew. "What price goin' down after lights out, and keepin' an eye open?"

"Easier to lock up the paper," said Clive. "Tom Merry's put it in a frame now, and it's hanging on the wall. Easy enough to lock it up for the night."

"Better still to catch Figgins burglin'," said Cardew. "I've got a bottle of red ink here, and we could send him home lookin' like a merry apache."

Clive laughed.

"I'm goin' down, anyway," said Cardew. "You fellows can please yourselves. I'm certain Figgins will try, and it would be only obligin' to leave the window unfastened for him."

"Oh, I'm game!" said the South African junior.

"Any old thing!" yawned Levison. "If we're caught out of dorm after lights out, it means a licking, that's all!"

"We shan't be caught!"

Levison & Co. went down to the Common-room

a little later, and found the fellows still grinning over the capture of Figgins' confession.

All the School House fellows agreed that Figgins' star was on the wane, and that he had nothing left to do but to hide his diminished head.

Tom Merry & Co. had half expected some desperate attempt on Figgins' part to recover the document. But it was still there in its frame when the juniors went to bed.

Ten minutes after lights out, Cardew slipped from his bed in the Fourth Form dormitory, and Levison and Clive followed his example.

"Bai Jove! Who's gettin' up?" came a sleepy voice from Arthur Augustus' bed.

The swell of St. Jim's sat up.

"Is that you, Levison?"

"Yes; don't wake the House!"

"I twust, Levison, that you are not goin' to bweak bounds?" said Arthur Augustus severely.

"Go hon!"

"Weally, Levison, I must wemonstwate if you are beginnin' your old twicks again. I wegard it as wotten in the extweme. Gwoogh!" finished Arthur Augustus, as a pillow descended upon his head.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Arthur Augustus struggled out of bed in a wrathful mood.

"You uttah wottah! Where are you? Bai Jove!" Arthur Augustus gave a yelp as he caught his ankle on the leg of the bed. "Oh! deah! You uttah wottah, I am goin' to give you a feahful thwashin'!"

"Shut up, ass!" came from Blake's bed.

"Weally, Blake——"

"Do you want to bring Railton up here, fat-head?"

"I have been stwuck with a pillow——"

"You'll be struck with a fist if you don't shut up and let a chap go to sleep."

"Wats! I wepeat wats!"

And as Levison & Co. were gone, Arthur Augustus returned to bed, with vengeance still unsatisfied.

Meanwhile, Levison & Co. were creeping cautiously downstairs.

The junior quarters were all in darkness, and they succeeded in getting into the Common-room unseen and unheard.

Cardew closed the door after they were in the room. He pressed his face to the window and looked out.

There was a glimmer of moonlight on the trees and buildings without.

"Nothin' yet!" he drawled.

He unfastened the catch of the window, and



As Tom Merry rushed into the woodshed he caught his foot in a cord stretched across the doorway and fell headlong. In a moment his followers were stumbling over him, and rolling right and left.

"Sock it to 'em!" roared Figgins, and the New House fellows rushed to the attack.

the trio waited. They had a good wait before them in the darkness, and Levison and Clive nodded off into a doze in the armchairs. Cardew remained by the window, watching.

He grinned as two moving shadows crossed the dim light outside.

"They're comin'!" he whispered.

Levison and Clive were wide awake at once.

They watched in breathless silence. Two figures had halted below the big window, and they recognised Figgins and Kerr.

Kerr was buking up his comrade to the broad stone sill. The juniors within heard the scraping of a knife on the sash.

Whether Figgins would have succeeded in pushing back the catch with his penknife, if it had been shut, was a question. But as it was already open, Figgins had no difficulty. His blade glided along between the sashes quite easily, so easily that Figgins might have suspected that the catch was already pushed back, if he had been a more suspicious fellow.

"All serene!" Levison & Co. heard the cautious whisper outside. "Now we shan't be long, Kerr!"

"We shan't, right enough!" murmured Cardew.

The lower sash was pushed up, and Figgins' head was pushed in.

Figgins blinked round the dark room, seeing nothing. The three School House fellows had drawn back into the shadows.

Figgins threw his leg over the window-ledge and dropped into the room. All seemed plain sailing. He had only to take the document from the wall, and—

"Good-evenin'!"

Figgins started violently as he heard Cardew's mocking voice. He spun round, and as he did so three pairs of hands closed on him.

"Fancy meetin' you!" drawled Cardew.

There was a suppressed chuckle. Figgins breathed hard through his nose as he struggled silently. But his struggles were in vain; even the muscular Figgins was not of much use against three.

He was whirled back to the window and pushed half-way out, and as he lay something wet and smelly drenched over his face.

It was the red ink from Cardew's bottle.

"Gurrrrrh!" gurgled Figgins.

Kerr was clambering furiously upon the high sill, realising that his chum had fallen into the hands of the Philistines.

Figgins, struggling and gasping, was shoved out fairly on Kerr's head. One of his boots clumped on Kerr's ear, and his elbow caught Kerr in the eye, and the Scottish junior rolled over on the ground, gasping.

Figgins was dropped beside him by the hands above. Three grinning faces looked down at the sprawling juniors.

"Good-night!" murmured Cardew.

The window was shut, and the catch clicked home.

Figgins and Kerr staggered up, breathless and enraged.

"Oh crumbs!" gasped Figgins. "My funny-bone's giving me jip! I've knocked it against something! Ow-ow-ow!"

"Oh, you frabjous ass!" moaned Kerr. "It was my eye, you chump! Ow!"

"I wish you'd keep your blessed eye out of the way!" said Figgins crossly.

"Yow-ow! Fathead! Oh, my hat!"

"The dashed window's shut!" growled Figgins. "I—I suppose it's all up!"

"Oh, let's get back! We might have known they'd be on the look-out!" growled Kerr. "Come on!"

"My face is wet. They've shoved something on me—"

"Oh, bother your face!"

In no very good humour, the New House chums retired. The game was evidently up that night, at least. In his dormitory Figgins discovered what it was that was on his face, and with feelings that could not be expressed in words, he washed and washed and washed to get it off.

When Figgins went to bed at last he still had a very rosy complexion.

Levison & Co. had returned to their quarters in a merry mood. Several School House Fourth Formers woke up as they were turning in, and wanted to know what was the matter.

Clive explained, and the juniors chortled. And they looked forward with great anticipation to seeing George Figgins' complexion in the morning.

CHAPTER 5.

Nice for Figgins!

GEORGE FIGGINS of the Fourth Form did not enjoy himself that morning.

He rose with a very red face. Redfern suggested that he was blushing for his long list of failures as a leader; but Figgins' blush, like the celebrated smile, was one that wouldn't come off.

The Paper for the Boy of Today!

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He had washed and washed it over-night, and he washed and washed it again in the morning. The red ink had been washed away, but it left a hue of red fairly grained in Figgins' skin. His efforts only reduced that hue to an artistic shade of rose-pink. His face had a striking appearance, and the New House Fourth Formers chortled whenever they looked at him.

It was worse when Figgins went downstairs. All the New House fellows had a view then of his glowing countenance. Thompson of the Shell shaded his eyes with his hand, as if Figgins dazzled him. Montieth, the head prefect of the House, stopped him in the passage and demanded to know what game he was playing. Jameson of the Third raised an alarm that the Red Indians were coming.

Figgins' ears were burning redder than his face when he went in to breakfast. Fortunately for him, he escaped the eagle eye of his House-master. But when the Fourth Form turned up for lessons in the Form-room, Figgins found all eyes of the School House Fourth focused on him.

"Bai Jove! He's blushin'!" murmured Arthur Augustus.

"Red as a rose is he!" sang Digby softly.

"Where did you dig up that face, Figgy?" inquired Mellish.

"Did you dig it up, or did it grow?" Trimble wanted to know.

Figgins only glared.

Mr. Lathom, the master of the Fourth, became conscious of an undercurrent of merriment in his class, and he frowned at the juniors.

"Kindly keep order!" he said severely. "Mellish, the Fourth Form is not a place for laughter! Take fifty lines!"

"I couldn't help it, sir," said Mellish meekly. "Figgins' face is so funny, sir!"

"What?" Mr. Lathom looked at Figgins. "Bless my soul! What is the matter with your face, Figgins?"

"Nothing, sir!" stammered the unhappy Figgins.

Mr. Lathom peered at him over his glasses.

"There is something very much the matter, Figgins. It appears to be a kind of rash!"

"It's not a rash, sir! It's red ink!"

Mr. Lathom jumped.

"Red ink!" he thundered. "You have dared, Figgins, to come into the Form-room with your face reddened with ink? Are you out of your senses, boy?"

"I—I—I—"

"I suppose this is a practical joke! You must learn, Figgins, that the Form-room is not the place for practical jokes. Go and stand in the corner!"

"Wha-a-at?"

"If you act like a child, Figgins, you must be treated as a child. Stand in the corner during the lesson!"

Figgins' face was redder now than if whole gallons of red ink had been spilt upon it. To be stood in a corner like a naughty fag of the Second Form was a little too much. Figgins fairly limped to the corner of the class-room, wishing that the floor would open and swallow him up.

"If you please, sir—"

"You may sit down, Cardew."

"But, sir, I spilt the ink on Figgins!"

"Oh! Then you may take a hundred lines, and be silent!" snapped Mr. Lathom. "We shall

now proceed. Any further interruptions will be punished by detention for the afternoon!"

And as the afternoon was a half-holiday, the Fourth Form were very careful after that.

Figgins remained standing in the corner, the centre of grinning glances, till at last Mr. Lathom gave him permission to resume his place.

Morning lessons were a horror to Figgins that day. But when the Fourth were dismissed, things were no pleasanter. In the passage a dozen School House fellows began to sing in chorus:

"Little Jack Horner
Stood in the corner!"

Figgins hurried away to the New House, to hide himself and his blushing face from sight. In the quadrangle he encountered the Terrible Three, the Shell being already out from lessons.

They shaded their eyes as Figgins came by. Monty Lowther fanned himself. Figgins gave them a glare, and rushed on.

He spent the next half-hour in a bath-room, scrubbing away at his face with hot water and lathering soap. His face was like a beetroot when he had finished, but most of the clinging



"And they say
that travel
broadens one!"

Half-a-crown
has been a-
warded to T.
Bacon, 53, Evans
Street, Whit-
more Reans,
Wolverhampton.

traces of the ink had gone. When he came down to his study, he had lost some of his high colour.

Kerr and Wynn joined him there, looking as grave as they could.

"How does it look now?" asked the miserable Figgins.

"Much better!" said Kerr loyally. "It must have been some beastly indelible ink that villain Cardew used. It really doesn't show much now, though!"

"Only a pretty pink!" said Fatty Wynn comfortingly. "It's wearing off, too!"

"Hallo, what's that?" Figgins looked round as a paper was slipped under the study door.

He picked it up and read it, with a dark frown. Upon it was written:

"George Figgins! Take Notice!
You're too funny for a skipper. You're sacked!"

Kerr looked at it, and tore the door open. But the fellow who had slipped that paper under the door was gone.

Figgins crumpled it with his hands.

"I'm fed up with this!" he exclaimed. "I'm going to resign! You can take on the job, Kerr, as the fellows seem to want you!"

"Rats!" said Kerr. "You're not going to resign. It will be all right when we've dished

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,613.

the School House rotters and put them in their place!"

"Well, how are we going to do it?" demanded Figgins. "We've lost all our prestige. Can't you think out a wheeze? What's the good of having a dashed Scotsman in the study if he can't think out something?"

Kerr smiled.

"I've been thinking," he said quietly.

Figgins looked hopeful. Figgins freely admitted that his Scots chum furnished most of the brains in the study, and his reliance upon Kerr was unbounded.

"Go it, old chap!" he said.

"We've been rehearsing our new play lately," said Kerr.

"Oh, blow the play! Never mind that now!"

"Our new play, called 'The New Boy,'" said Kerr, unheeding. "When I was made up as the new boy for the play, Figgy, you said that my own pater wouldn't know me!"

"He wouldn't," said Figgins. "But what's that got to do with dishing the School House, and getting that blessed document back?"

"Lots," said Kerr.

"Blessed if I can see it!"

"Lend me your ears, then!" said Kerr mysteriously.

And the Scots junior proceeded to explain in a low voice, and Figgins and Fatty Wynn opened their eyes as they listened—wide! And when Kerr had finished, Figgins rushed at him and fairly hugged him.

"It's the jape of the century!" he ejaculated. "If—if you can do it—if it comes off! Oh, my hat!"

"Hurrah!" roared Fatty Wynn.

The door opened, and Redfern looked in.

"You fellows enjoying yourselves?" he queried.

"Figgy's complexion having that effect on you?" "Come in, fathead, and hear the wheeze!" said Figgins.

Redfern came in, and in a minute more he was roaring.

"Ha, ha, ha! But you can't do it, Kerr! You'll be spotted!"

"Rats!" said Figgins. "Kerr can do it on his head!"

"I'm going to try!" said Kerr.

"But keep it dark!" gurgled Fatty Wynn.

"If the School House bounders hear a whisper of—"

"Not a syllable outside this study!" grinned Redfern. "Oh, what larks! We'll all lend a hand, Kerr! And if it comes off—"

"It will come off!" said Figgins serenely.

And the chums of the New House proceeded to discuss, in subdued but excited voices, the terrific wheeze that had come into George Francis Kerr's fertile brain.

CHAPTER 6.

A Flattering Request!

"MERRY!"

"Adsum!" smiled Tom Merry.

The Terrible Three were standing in the doorway of the School House after dinner.

There was a Form match arranged for that afternoon between the Shell and the Fourth, and the chums of the Shell were debating whether they could safely entrust that match to the smaller fry, and have an afternoon at the pictures. The

voice of Kildare of the Sixth interrupted the debate.

"You're wanted," said the prefect. "Telephone!"

"My hat! Somebody's phoning me?" exclaimed Tom, in surprise. "Thanks for taking the call, Kildare!"

Kildare laughed.

"It's Mr. Railton," he said. "He's gone over to Wayland for the afternoon, and he seems to have rung up from there. He wants to speak to you."

"Oh, all serene!"

Manners and Lowther went with their chum to the prefects'-room, all of them in a state of surprise.

They had seen Mr. Railton, the Housemaster of the School House, go out immediately after dinner, and were aware that he was attending a meeting in Wayland. Why the Housemaster should want to telephone to Tom Merry from the market town was a deep mystery.

Tom picked up the receiver.

"Hallo!"

"Hallo!" came a deep voice through the telephone. "Is that Merry?"

"Yes, sir. Is that Mr. Railton?"

"Did not Kildare tell you that Mr. Railton desired to speak to you?"

"Yes, sir."

"Very well. I wish you to render me a small service this afternoon, Merry, if you have no objection."

"None at all, sir," said Tom at once.

"There's a new boy coming this afternoon, Merry."

"Yes, sir," said Tom, wondering how that concerned him.

"I find I shall not be able to be at the station. Will you meet him at Rylcombe station and take him to the school? I shall see him in the train here at Wayland Station."

"Certainly, sir."

"He will arrive at half-past two, so there is little time to lose. I hope this will not seriously interfere with your occupation for the afternoon, Merry?"

"Ahem! Not at all, sir."

"I should prefer you to meet him, Merry, and perhaps you might take some friends with you—Manners and Lowther and D'Arcy, if they are willing to go. I desire this new boy to meet some of the juniors who enjoy my confidence and esteem, in order to give him a pleasant impression of the school on his arrival."

"Oh!" ejaculated Tom Merry.

He could not help being surprised. Mr. Railton's opinion was very flattering, certainly, and Tom was quite conscious of the great merits of the Terrible Three. But he never expected to hear his Housemaster telling him of the confidence and esteem he felt for the celebrated trio.

"What did you say, Merry?"

"I'll go with pleasure, sir."

"Very good! Please meet the train. You will know the new boy, I think—he wears glasses, and you will address him as Albert Adolphus Walker."

"Shall I?" murmured Tom Merry.

"What?"

"I mean—yes, sir! Anything else, sir?"

"Kindly show the new boy every attention, Merry. He is a lad for whom I have a very great regard."

"Certainly, sir."

"You will explain to him that it is not

LAUGH THESE OFF!

—with Monty Lowther.



Hallo, Everybody!

Muffin men appeared in Wayland blowing cornets. The idea was to declare the season officially open with a flourish of crumpets!

An American comedian always travels with several gag men to think out his jokes. He has his wits about him!

Overheard in Rylcombe: "The government have sent down an official to instruct me to collect my stock of every description and have them branded," sighed Farmer Blunt. "Well, I suppose it's all right, but honestly, I believe I'm going to have a terrible time with them bees!"

P.-c. Crump had just made his first arrest for weeks when his helmet blew over a hedge. "Let me go and get it for you, sir," offered the prisoner. "Not blooming likely!" snorted P.-c. Crump knowingly. "You just wait here while I get it!"

Hollywood scenario writer complains that critics have found fault with the finish of his new film. Perhaps it was too far from the beginning!

Who was Hannibal? Who was Agrippa? Who was Tiberius? Who was Sitting Bull? Who was Don Quixote? Who was Tamerlane the Magnificent? If you can answer that little

necessary for him to report himself to the Head, but to wait for my return."

"Very well, sir!"

"That is all, Merry. I am very much obliged!"

"Not at all, sir! Good-bye!"

Tom Merry hung up the receiver. His chums were regarding him questioningly.

"Well?" said Manners and Lowther together.

"No footer for us this afternoon," said Tom.

"We've got to oblige a Housemaster who regards us with confidence and esteem."

"Wha-a-at?"

Tom Merry explained. Lowther whistled.

"Very nice of Railton to put it like that," said Manners. "After all, we're rather estimable chaps, so it's not surprising. We'll go, of course. Blessed if I know why he wants us to take Gussy."

"Well, let's go and interview the great and only," remarked Lowther.

The Terrible Three left the prefects' room, and looked for Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

They found him in footer garb in the quad, talking to Blake, Herries, and Dig.

"I wathah think we're goin' to lick you

lot straight off the reel, you know more than I do!

A comedian at the Wayland Hippodrome tells me audiences are quicker to laugh than they used to be. Of course, they know the jokes so much better nowadays!

Brief story: "Leatherhead?" queried the motorist of the village yokel. "Fishface yourself!" responded the yokel.

"Mellish plays a fair game of nap, doesn't he?" asked Racke of Crooke. "Yes, if you watch him!" replied Crooke.

"Gwacious, Twimble!" exclaimed D'Arcy at a party in Study No. 6. "If you eat any more I am sure you will burst!" "Well, pass the cake and stand out of the way!" mumbled Baggy Trimble happily.

From a Third Form examination paper: An adult is a person who has stopped growing at both ends and has begun growing in the middle!

Professor Lowther's Horoscope: You have an amazing character and you should succeed in everything you undertake, provided you undertake the right undertakings. It doesn't matter what month you were born in or who you are. I believe in doing my readers proud. Can I say fairer than that?

"Haven't I shaved you before?" asked the Rylcombe barber of the new customer. "No, I got these wounds in the Great War!" explained the customer.

Ju-jitsu forms part of the training of a well-known football club. The idea is to be able to tie the opposing team in knots.

Gore says his cousin is getting on fine with his driving lessons. He has just learned how to aim the thing!

Back again next week, chums.

boundahs this afternoon," Arthur Augustus confided to the Terrible Three. "I am in wathah good form."

"We're cutting the match," said Tom Merry. "Talbot will captain the Shell eleven."

"Oh!" said Blake. "There doesn't seem a run on football this afternoon. Figgins & Co. are cutting the match, too; they've gone out on their bikes. Of course, I can make up a topping Fourth Form eleven without those New Housebounders."

"The fact is, we're going to help you win," said Lowther.

"Eh? How?"

"By taking Gussy away."

"You uttah ass, Lowthah—"

"We want you, Gussy," said Tom Merry, laughing. "We've got to meet a new kid at the station, and you're coming with us."

D'Arcy shook his head.

"I am sowwy, deah boy, but I cannot cut the match. My services are wequiahed more than evah, as Figgins and Fatty Wynn are standin'

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out. I do not want the Fourth to wisk bein' beaten by the Shell."

"Noblesse oblige!" said Tom. "You simply must come, Gussy—it's by the special request of Mr. Railton."

"Bai Jove! That attahs the case, of course."

"Spoof!" said Blake suspiciously.

"Fact!" said Tom. And he detailed the conversation on the telephone.

Arthur Augustus looked very thoughtful.

"Of course, it is impos to wefuse the wequest of a Housemastah," he remarked. "Especially a bwick like old Wailton. Pway wait while I change my clobbah. I shall not keep you more than three-quartahs of an hour."

"You won't!" agreed Tom. "If you keep us more than three minutes, we shall come and yank you out by your cars."

"I should wefuse to be yanked out by my yahs, Tom Mewwy!"

And Arthur Augustus went in to change, and the Terrible Three walked down to Little Side with Blake to see the match begin.

CHAPTER 7.

Albert Adolphus Arrives!

JACK BLAKE was captaining the Fourth Form eleven, and Talbot of the Shell took Tom Merry's place.

In a Form match the sides were picked from both Houses, and Figgins & Co. had cut the footer for the afternoon; but the Shell were also losing the services of the Terrible Three, so matters were about even.

The two teams went on to the field, and the game commenced.

Tom Merry glanced up at the clock-tower over the elms after the game had been in progress about ten minutes.

"Time to get off!" he remarked.

The chums went in search of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. They found the swell of St. Jim's in the Fourth Form dormitory, adorning himself before a glass in quite a thorough manner.

"Keepin' you waitin', deah boys?" asked D'Arcy, looking round.

"Yes, you ass!"

"Sowwy, but a chap is bound to make himself look watah wespectable goin' to meet a new fellow—a fellow the Housemastah knows, you know. I shall not be more than anohtah quartah of an hour."

"Take hold of his ears!" said Tom.

"Weally, you ass——"

Tom Merry took out his watch.

"I give you one minute," he said. "At the end of a minute you're coming out, if you've got nothing on but your trousers!"

"You uttah ass——"

"Ten seconds!" said Tom.

"It's uttahly impos for me to finish dwessin' in one minute, Tom Mewwy!"

"Half a minute!"

"Moreovah, I have not finally decided whethah this tie will do."

"Fifty seconds!"

"Look here, you uttah ass, I wefuse to be huwwied! You are thwovin' me into quite a futtah. I wish it to be distinctly undahstood that I wefuse to be huwwied."

Tom Merry slipped his watch back into his pocket.

"Time's up! Collar him!"

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,613.

"Keep off, you wuffians!" shouted Arthur Augustus. "I wefuse to be collahed! Lowthah, I shall stwike you! Mannahs, you beast! Tom Mewwy, you wuffianly wottah! Yawwooooh!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy went out of the dormitory struggling in the grasp of the Terrible Three.

"You uttah asses! I cannot go to the station in my shirtsleeves! Wefuse me! Yawwooooh!"

"Bring his jacket, Manners, while we help him along."

"Right-ho!"

"And the necktie!" shrieked Arthur Augustus, as he was propelled towards the stairs. "And the toppah, and my gloves, and the cane!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Manners ran after them with the jacket and the necktie and the hat, grinning.

Arthur Augustus was allowed to halt on the landing to put them on, which he did in a state of great wrath.

"Now come on!" said Tom.

"Did you bwing my gloves, Mannahs?"

"What do you think?"

"Then I must weturn to fetch them."

"If you don't come at once we'll take you out without a necktie or a hat," said Tom Merry.

That dire threat was enough, and the Shell fellows walked him out of the School House.

In the quadrangle Arthur Augustus made an attempt to bolt, but Tom Merry and Lowther took his arms and walked him down to the gates.

Manners walked behind.

"Keep going, Gussy," he remarked. "I'll help you with my boot whenever you lag. Thus!"

"Yawwooh!"

"And thus!"

"You feahful wuffian, you are makin' my twosahs muddy!"

"Well, buck up!"

Arthur Augustus bucked up, and the four juniors left the school gates and walked down the lane towards Rylcombe.

"We've only just got time to meet the train," said Tom Merry. "Let's chase Gussy's silk hat to the village—what?"

"Good wheeze!" exclaimed Manners and Lowther heartily.

"Chuck it down, Gussy!"

"I wefuse to do anythin' of the sort, you wottahs! I shall stwike you if you touch my hat!"

And Arthur Augustus strode on ahead, keeping a safe distance from his comrades.

The Terrible Three followed him, smiling cheerfully. The juniors arrived in Rylcombe, and reached the station as the train from Wayland Junction was signalled.

"Just in time," said Lowther cheerfully.

"Lucky we didn't wait for Gussy's gloves!"

"Wats!"

"Put on your best smiles," said Tom Merry.

"This new kid must be somebody a bit out of the ordinary for Railton to bother about. Must be a relation of Railton's. Don't scowl, Gussy!"

"I'm not scowlin', you uttah ass!"

Arthur Augustus composed his noble features into an amiable expression as the train came in. He wanted to make a good impression on the new boy, about whom Mr. Railton seemed so particular.

The train stopped, and the four juniors looked out rather curiously for the new boy.

It was not customary for the School House master to take so much note of the arrival of a new junior, and it seemed to indicate that Albert



Figgins was pushed half-way out of the window, and then something wet and smelly drenched over his face. It was the red ink from Cardew's bottle. "Gurrrrrrrrh!" gurgled Figgins.

Adolphus Walker was a new kid a trifle out of the common. If he were a connection of "old Railton's" the juniors were prepared to make very much of him. Old Railton was the idol of the School House fellows.

There were only five or six passengers in the local train from the junction. One of them was a boy in glasses, so the juniors decided at once that this was Albert Adolphus Walker.

They surveyed him with interest.

He was a lad about their own age, and dressed in Etons, with a silk hat. His face was highly coloured, as if he had been considerably sunburnt. His eyebrows were very thick and dark and bushy. His hair—what could be seen of it—was of that bright colour commonly called ginger. He wore a very large pair of glasses, which imparted a somewhat owl-like aspect to his face. Taken altogether, he was a somewhat striking-looking lad.

"I suppose that's the merchant!" said Tom Merry. "Come on!"

And the St. Jim's juniors bore down upon the newcomer.

CHAPTER 8.

A Very Remarkable New Boy!

TOM MERRY & CO. saluted the stranger politely.

The stranger blinked at them through his big spectacles, and raised his hat in response, disclosing a very rich head of hair.

"You're Walker?" asked Tom Merry.

"Eh?"

"Are you the new chap for St. Jim's?"

The youth put a hand to his ear and bent his head slightly.

"Did you speak to me?" he asked.

"Bai Jovel! The poor chap's deaf!" said Arthur Augustus.

"Are you Walker?" shouted Tom Merry.

"Oh! Have you come to meet me? I am going to St. Jim's."

"Yes, we've come."

"Eh?"

"Oh, my hat! We've come to take you to the school!" exclaimed Tom Merry.

"Not at all!"

"Eh?" It was Tom Merry's turn to say "Eh?"

"I do not take you for a fool," said Master Walker. "I dare say you state the facts; but I do not yet know you, and I cannot say."

Manners and Lowther chuckled, and Arthur Augustus grinned.

Tom Merry turned pink.

"We've come to take you to St. Jim's!" shouted Tom. The other passengers were looking round, and old Trumble, the porter, was staring and grinning.

"Oh! That is very kind of you."

"Come on," said Tom. "Where's your box?"

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,613.

"On my feet!" said Master Walker, with an air of wonder.

"Your—your—your feet?" stammered Tom.

"Didn't you ask me where my socks were?"

"Oh crumbs! No; your box!" roared the captain of the Shell.

"Oh, my box! Excuse me! I did not quite catch your words! Perhaps I ought to mention that I am somewhat hard of hearing."

"No need to mention it!" grinned Lowther.

"Eh?"

"Have you a box with you?" shouted Tom, beginning to wish that Mr. Railton did not esteem him so much. He would quite willingly have left to any other fellow the task of looking after this new merchant.

"Oh, no! Only this umbrella!"

"Oh, bother the broolly! Come on, then!"

"Eh?"

Tom Merry grasped Master Walker's arm and walked him out of the station.

He had had enough of the stares and grins on the platform. Albert Adolphus Walker went very amicably. He seemed pleased at being met at the station by the juniors. The pleasure was all on his side, as a matter of fact.

He stopped on the pavement outside, and blinked about him owlishly.

"What a pretty little village!" he said. His voice was high-pitched and loud. He seemed to have the trick of many deaf people of speaking unnecessarily loudly. Several persons at a good distance heard his remark and looked round. Police-constable Crump, who represented law and order in Rylcombe, stared across the pavement from where he was talking with the ancient cabby. "Is that the village policeman?"

"Oh, yes! Come on!"

"What a very fat policeman!"

"Bai Jove!"

"Shurrup, old Crump can hear you!"

"Eh?"

"Oh dear!" groaned Tom Merry.

Albert Adolphus Walker appeared to think that other people were as hard of hearing as himself, or else he was unaware that his voice was very loud and clear.

Mr. Crump had turned as red as a turkey-cock, and he was frowning majestically at the St. Jim's juniors. He was not flattered at being described as a very fat policeman.

"Bai Jove!" murmured Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "This chap is wathah a corkah. Let's get him away."

"Come on, Walker!" bawled Manners.

"Eh?"

"Come on to the school."

"Dear me! Yes, now you mention it, he does look a little stupid," said Master Walker, still blinking at P.-c. Crump. "But is it quite polite to call him a fool?"

Mr. Crump gave the juniors a glare and strode majestically away.

The Terrible Three were red with vexation.

"For goodness gwacious' sake, let's get this fellow away!" said Arthur Augustus. "We shall have the whole village wound us soon."

Albert Adolphus Walker was marched down the street. But he did not seem in a hurry to get to the school. He persisted in walking slowly and blinking round at every object of interest and making remarks in his painfully loud and penetrating voice.

He paused as he sighted the stout and rubicund vicar of Rylcombe coming down the street.

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,613.

The juniors "capped" Mr. Hutton respectfully, and Albert Adolphus remarked:

"What a very stout clergyman!"

Mr. Hutton gave the juniors one glare, and strode on, with a face like thunder.

Tom Merry & Co. wished that the ground would open and swallow them up.

They looked at Albert Adolphus Walker, wondering whether it would do him good to begin his school career with a good bumping.

Albert Adolphus blinked at them innocently.

"Get him along!" gasped Manners.

The juniors breathed more freely when they got Albert Adolphus out of the village into the lane. They piloted him away to St. Jim's, Walker ambling on contentedly, with his umbrella under his arm.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's face was a study; but his brow gradually cleared.

"Pway don't be watty with this feahful boundah," he said, speaking with the conviction that Albert Adolphus could not hear him. "Mr. Wailton has wequested us to look aftah him, and we are bound to play up."

"No wonder Railton wanted the animal looked after!" said Monty Lowther. "No wonder he picked us out to do it! I don't think any other chap would stand him."

"It was a vevy gweat compliment to us, Lowthah."

"Bow-wow!"

"Besides, the poor chap is labouwin' under a vevy heavy infiction in bein' deaf," said Arthur Augustus. "We are bound to tweek him with sympathetic considervation."

"He can't help being deaf, but he can help shouting offensive remarks at people!" growled Manners.

"Bein' deaf, deah boy, he does not wealise that his voice cawwies so fah. I twust you fellows will not lose patience with him and fail to cawwy out Mr. Wailton's wequest."

"Oh, we're going to look after him!" said Tom Merry.

"Are you fellows speaking?" asked Walker.

"Ahem! Yes. Come on!"

"You have not yet told me your names," said Albert Adolphus, with a beaming smile. "I hope we are going to be great friends and constant companions."

"Bai Jove!"

"You're a very hopeful merchant, then!" muttered Manners.

"Eh?"

"I'm Tom Merry," said Tom. "This is Manners—"

"Your name is Cherry?"

"No; Merry!"

"Oh, Sherry! What a very peculiar name!"

"Let it go at Sherry!" groaned Lowther. "Come on!"

"And what is your friend's name—the one with the funny face?" asked the new boy, with a nod after Lowther, who had strode on.

"With the what?" ejaculated Lowther.

"Don't get watty, Lowthah; he did not know you could heah him when he blurted out that wathah unpleasant fact—"

"You silly ass!" roared Lowther.

"Weally, Lowthah, I was only explainin'—"

"His name's Lowther!" shouted Tom.

"Grouser?"

"No, Lowther."

"Oh, Moulder! I am very glad to make your acquaintance, Moulder."

"It's more than I am to make yours!" growled

Detective Kerr Investigates

No. 26.

THE WIRELESS ALIBI.



MR. RATCLIFF, the master of the New House, was crossing the quadrangle one foggy Saturday evening when a hosepipe, with which Taggles, the porter, had been washing down Mr. Ratcliff's car, was suddenly played on Mr. Ratcliff himself! In a few seconds the House-master was drenched, and, wet to the skin with the icy water, he was obliged to bolt for cover. A stern inquiry, conducted by the Head, resulted in a list of suspects being drawn up. Whilst the Head hesitated between them, "Detective" Kerr questioned each in turn.

GRUNDY: Yes, Kerr, for some silly reason Dr. Holmes imagines I'm the chap who turned the hose on Mr. Ratcliff.

KERR: You didn't, of course?

GRUNDY: It was a dangerous trick to play on a man of his age. Might have given him pneumonia.

KERR: Mr. Ratcliff reported you the other day for sparring with Pratt under Ratty's own window, didn't he?

GRUNDY: Yes; and several fellows, including Monteith, the prefect, heard me vow I'd get my own back. That's why the Head is down on me.

KERR: Where were you actually at the time?

GRUNDY: Not wandering in the quad in the fog. It was thick enough here, but they say you couldn't see your hand before your face in Wayland. I was in my study, listening to my new wireless, with Wilkins and Gunn. They will bear me out if Dr. Holmes can't take my word.

KERR: You didn't turn the hose on Mr. Ratcliff, of course, Trimble?

TRIMBLE: No, I jolly well didn't—and if you try to fix this on me, you beast, I'll jolly well set my lawyers on to you! You're too jolly clever, Kerr—that's what's the matter with you!

Lowther, not at all pleased by the variation of his name.

"And this is Manners!" continued Tom.

"I am very happy to meet you, Spanner!"

"Bai Jove!"

"And this is D'Arcy of the Fourth."

"It is a pleasure to make your acquaintance, Charley! But what is your surname?"

"Not Charley—D'Arcy!" shrieked Tom Merry.

"Eh?"

"Oh cwumbs! Let him call me Charley if he likes," said Arthur Augustus hastily. "I do not mind in the least. Here we are, dear boys!"

The juniors came up to the gates.

KERR: I'm only trying to help. It's not a nice thing to be suspected of drenching a House-master.

TRIMBLE: All because I came running into the House immediately behind old Ratcliff! As if I'd have done that if I had just wetted him! I was scared the boulder with the hose was going to soak me, too!

KERR: You're in this, too, Redfern, I hear?

REDFERN: Oh, Ratty couldn't leave our study out! He thinks everything that annoys him in the New House is hatched out by myself, Owen, and Lawrence. Except what Figgins, Wynn, and yourself manage to engineer, that is. I wonder he hasn't had us all clapped in irons, pending judgment.

KERR: Let's see. It happened at precisely seven-thirty, they say. Where were you then, Reddy?

REDFERN: In the New House Common-room—but just then there happened to be nobody else there but my chums, Owen and Lawrence.

KERR: I'm lucky, Figgy. Ratty left me in his own study when he went across to the School House. He was jawing me over an exam paper, and was coming back to finish the lecture. So I'm not suspected. But you and Wynn, as my chums, are. You were in our study all the time?

FIGGINS: At seven-thirty, yes. But we went down to the Common-room and had "In Town To-night" on soon after.

KERR: Your name is Westby, isn't it? You're the errand-boy from the grocer's in Rylcombe?

WESTBY: That's right. What do you want with me, sir?

KERR: I hear Mr. Ratcliff reported you once for stealing fruit you were supposed to deliver?

WESTBY: I only took a few pears.

KERR: But you had a motive for getting even with Mr. Ratcliff if you were near St. Jim's on Saturday at seven-thirty. The gates were open, and anybody could have squirted Mr. Ratcliff and made off.

WESTBY: As it happened, I was in Wayland then. I remember hearing part of "In Town To-night" on the wireless in a shop. When I came out of the shop I saw it was twenty to eight by the town hall clock.

KERR: I see. Maybe you'll hear more of this, Westby.

(Who is the culprit? And how has he given himself away? Kerr's solution is on page 33.)

Albert Adolphus stopped to stare at Taggles, the porter, who was looking out of his lodge.

"Is that the school porter, Sherry?" he asked. Tom nodded.

It was the easiest way of answering Albert Adolphus in the affirmative.

"What a very crusty-looking porter!"

Taggles glared and went into his lodge and slammed the door.

"Oh, come on!" gasped Tom Merry.

And Adolphus Walker was marched in.

Two juniors who were chatting within the gates looked round.

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,613.

They were Figgins and Fatty Wynn of the New House.

"Hallo! What have you got there?" asked Figgins.

"New kid," said Monty Lowther. "Named Albert Adolphus Walker, deaf as a post, with the manners of a pig or a New House chap!"

"School House chap?" asked Fatty Wynn.

"I suppose so, as Railton asked us to bring him in. Otherwise, you'd have had the pleasure," said Tom Merry. "Come on, Walker!"

"These are friends of yours, Sherry?" asked Walker, with a smile. "Pray introduce me, Sherry!"

"Oh, my hat! Figgins and Wynn!" shouted Tom. "The long-legged duffer is Figgins and the fat bouncer is Wynn!"

"Dear me! I am very pleased to meet you, Higgins and Squinn. Did you say Higgins or Stiggins, Sherry?"

Tom Merry marched his protege on, without replying. Figgins and Fatty Wynn, grinning, watched the School House juniors as they went in. The two New House fellows seemed to be highly tickled by the arrival of Albert Adolphus Walker.

CHAPTER 9.

An Amazing Raid!

KILDARE of the Sixth was coming out of the School House when Tom Merry & Co. arrived there with their charge.

The captain of St. Jim's stopped and looked at the new boy.

"It's the new kid, Kildare," explained Tom. "Hallo! I didn't know there was a new kid for this House to-day. What's his name?"

"Walker."

Kildare looked puzzled. "You'd better take him to the Head, as Mr. Railton is out," he said. "Have you brought him from the station?"

"Yes; Mr. Railton asked us to meet him there," explained Tom Merry. "That was what he was telephoning about from Wayland."

"Oh!" said Kildare. "It's rather odd."

"Mr. Railton says we're not to take him to the Head, but he's to report to Railton when he comes in."

"Oh, all right! Mrs. Mimms will give him some tea if he wants any. This your first school, young 'un?" asked Kildare, with a kind nod to the new boy.

"Eh?"

"Hallo! Is he deaf?"

"Deaf as a merry adder!"

"Oh! Well, be decent to him. He can't help being deaf, you know," said Kildare good-naturedly. "He looks rather a sheepish young ass, and you kids might look after him a bit, if you're not busy."

"Oh, we're going to!" groaned Monty Lowther. "Railton asked us to."

"Yaas, wathah! We wegard it as bein' up to us."

Albert Adolphus was apparently listening with all his ears, as if trying to hear.

"I can't hear you," he said, blinking at Kildare. "Did you speak to me? I ought to mention that I am a trifle hard of hearing."

Kildare smiled. "All serene," he said.

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,613.

"No; it is not necessary to scream; just speak clearly, that's all."

"Oh, my hat!" ejaculated Kildare.

"Eh? Did you say scat?"

"No!" gasped Kildare.

"Blow! Blow whom?"

"Great Jove! Take him in!" gasped Kildare.

"His people had better send him an ear-trumpet, I think."

And Kildare walked hastily away. He had had enough of Albert Adolphus. The latter blinked at him, apparently in surprise.

"Who is that, Sherry?" he asked.

"Kildare, the captain of the school."

"Dear me! He does not look like a silly fool; but I dare say you are right."

Kildare paused a moment, but he walked on. Tom Merry & Co. fairly dragged Albert Adolphus into the House.

"I suppose we'd better stand him some tea after his journey," said Tom Merry. "Are you hungry, Adolphus?"

"Eh?"

"Would you like some tea?"

Adolphus shook his head.

"No; not while the weather's rough like it is."

"Rough?" said Tom Merry dazedly.

"Yes. It would hardly be safe to go to sea, would it?"

"Oh crumbs! Not to sea—tea!" roared the captain of the Shell. "Would you like some tea in the study?"

Albert Adolphus looked down at his boots.

"Dusty, you mean," he said; "not muddy, so far as I can see."

"Bai Jove! I wathah think this chap will weigh me out in time. Howevah, it is up to us!" said Arthur Augustus heroically. "Hallo! Where the mewwy dickens is he goin'?"

Albert Adolphus sauntered down the passage into the Junior Common-room. He was blinking about him with an air of great interest.

"What room is this?" he asked, as the juniors followed him in.

"Junior Common-room."

"Dear me! What is that document?"

Albert Adolphus halted before the handsome gilt frame which contained the celebrated document in Figgins' fist. His eyes opened wide behind his glasses as he read:

"NOTICE!

"We hereby confess that we are a set of silly asses, and that we have been licked to the wide, and that our silly old House can't keep its end up."

"What does that mean, Sherry?"

"Oh, Christopher Columbus!" Tom Merry did not feel equal to explaining to Albert Adolphus all the circumstances of the House rivalry at St. Jim's, and the history of that remarkable document. "Never mind that—"

"But what does it mean?" persisted the new boy. "Why cannot your silly old House keep its end up?"

"Not our House—the other House!" shouted Tom. "It means that we've licked Figgins & Co. of the New House."

"Oh! You have been licked by Stiggins of the New House!"

"No!" shrieked Tom. "We've licked Figgins."

"Eh?"

"Come and have tea, for mercy's sake. Tea! TEA!"

"Yes, thank you. I should like a little tea," said Albert Adolphus, blinking. "Do you mind if I rest here a little first, on this very comfortable sofa? You need not trouble to remain. I will take a little nap."

"Oh, good!" said Tom Merry, in great relief. "We'll come and tell you when tea is ready, Walker."

"Thank you, I do not care for pork. A little bread-and-butter."

"Br-r-r-r!"

Tom Merry & Co. were glad enough to escape the company of Albert Adolphus for a time.

They left him resting on the sofa in the Common-room and hurried out.

"Buck up, deah boys!" said Arthur Augustus encouragingly. "The chap is wathah a twial, but I am sure he means well."

"My hat! Listen to that!" said Manners.

It was the sound of a heavy snore from the Common-room.

"Well, thank goodness he's asleep!" said Tom. "It will give us a bit of a rest. Let's get tea for the bounder."

"Dash it all, I want a rest as well as Walker!" said Monty Lowther. "Let's go and have a look at the footer first."

"Well, we mustn't be long," said Tom.

The chums of the School House walked down to the footer field.

They found Figgins and Fatty Wynn looking on at the game.

"Hallo! Where's your friend?" asked Figgins.

"Snoring in the Common-room," grunted Manners.

"In the Common-room?" ejaculated Figgins, with a peculiar glimmer in his eyes.

"Yes; thank goodness!"

"How's the match goin', deah boy?"

"Fourth leading by the odd goal," said Fatty Wynn. "Fourth will win!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Rats!" said the Terrible Three.

The juniors watched the match for some time, till a sense of duty drove them back to the School House to look after the new boy.

Tea was prepared in Study No. 6.

Then they descended to the Common-room to call Albert Adolphus.

A steady sound of snoring greeted them as they entered.

The new boy was stretched on the sofa, just as they had left him.

"Bettah wake him up," said Arthur Augustus.

"Hallo!" exclaimed Monty Lowther suddenly.

"Bai Jove!"

"New House rotters have been here! My hat!"

Tom Merry & Co. stared at the trophy on the wall. The frame was still there and the glass was there, but the document in Figgins' fist was gone.

It had been removed from the frame; it had vanished. In its place was a brief message pencilled on the cardboard mount:

"RATS!

"RATS!

"RATS!

CHAPTER 10.

Extraordinary!

TOM MERRY & CO. stared blankly at the message.

There was no doubt that the document had been raided by a New House fellow.

A fragment of charred paper in the fender indicated what had become of it. And that message had been left in its place.

But how?

There were School House fellows in and out of the House all the time, and the slightest sign of a New House raider would have caused an alarm. Indeed, the new boy had been in the Common-room when the raid must have taken place—snoring within a few yards of the raided document.

The windows were open only at the top; and in the daylight New House fellows could hardly



"Whatever have you been shaving with, dad?"

"Your pencil-sharpener!"

Half-a-crown has been awarded to A. Turner, Gate House, Palgrave, near Diss, Norfolk.

have ventured to climb into the School House by the windows. It could certainly not have been done unobserved.

"Well, my hat!" gasped Tom Merry. "It—it must have been Figgins—"

"Figgins was on the footer ground," said Manners; "so was Wynn."

"Kerr, then. I noticed Kerr wasn't with them. The blessed rotter sneaked into the House somehow—"

"But how could he have sneaked in?" exclaimed Lowther. "There's Kerruish and Gibbons playing chess in the window seat; they'd have given the alarm. They couldn't have seen him."

"And there's that silly ass snoring on the sofa!" exclaimed Manners. "Of course, he had to be snoring, the howling dummy! Here, wake up!"

Manners shook the new junior roughly by the shoulder.

Albert Adolphus started up and hit out suddenly.

Manners gave a yell as he caught Walker's knuckles with his nose and sat down violently on the floor.

"Yaroooh!"

Walker sat up, blinking behind his spectacles.

"Dear me! Did I knock something?" he ejaculated.

"You frabjous idiot!" roared Manners. "You've nearly squashed my nose!"

"Whose toes?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Manners jumped up.

"Look here, that silly idiot wants a licking—and I'm going to give him one!" he exclaimed.

"I don't believe that was an accident!"

"Weally, Mannahs—"

"WITH KIND REGARDS FROM THE NEW HOUSE!"

Tom Merry caught his exasperated chum in time.

"Hold on!" Tom dragged Manners back, while Walker blinked at them from the sofa. "Keep your temper, old chap. It was an accident, of course!"

"Mannahs, I twust you are not goin' to be guilty of the extwemely wepwehensible action of stwikin' a chap with glasses——"

"Oh, ring off!" growled Manners. "I'm not going to hit the silly beast! But I'm fed-up with him!"

"Dear me! Is anything the matter?" asked Walker.

"Yaas, wathah! Somebody has waided that document off the wall, Walkah."

"Eh?"

"Did you see anyone come into the room while we were out?" shouted Tom Merry.

"Not at all. He was very rough with me, but I should not think of calling him a lout."

"Oh, my hat! Somebody's been here!" yelled Tom. "Have you been asleep all the time?"

"No. Spanner was rough, but it was not a crime."

"Did you wake up at all while we were gone?" raved Tom Merry.

"Oh, all right! If Spanner only wanted to give me a shaking, I don't mind. Is tea ready?"

Tom Merry groaned and gave it up.

"Yes, tea's ready. Come on!"

"Eh?"

Tom Merry grasped Walker by the shoulder; jerked him off the sofa, and walked him out of the Common-room.

Lowther dragged the New House message from the frame and tore it to pieces.

The trophy was lost for ever, and it remained a mystery how it had been raided from the Common-room.

Arthur Augustus fanned himself as he followed the new boy and Tom Merry to Study No. 6.

"Bai Jove!" he remarked. "I have sevewal times met fellows who were wathah corkahs; but that fellow Walkah takes the whole cake, you know! He is the weirdest corkah I have evah met!"

Albert Adolphus Walker sat down in Study No. 6 with an affable smile upon his face. He seemed in high good-humour, and did not appear to observe the growing, though suppressed, exasperation of his companions. Flattering as Mr. Railton's esteem was, Tom Merry & Co. wished heartily that some less-esteemed person had charge of the new boy for the afternoon. How he was going to get on at St. Jim's was a great mystery.

Master Walker had a good appetite, and he did full justice to the fare in Study No. 6.

The sound of yelling from the footer ground drew the juniors to the study window before tea was finished.

"Shell wins! Bravo!"

"Good egg!" said Tom Merry. "I rather thought we should pull it off."

"Yaas; I was wathah afwaid of what would happen if I stood out of the match," remarked Arthur Augustus thoughtfully.

The juniors turned back to the tea-table. A tramp of feet sounded in the passage; and Blake, Herries, and Digby came in.

They looked very warm and ruddy after the match.

"Sowwy you've been licked, Blake! I wathah expected it, though."

"Fathead!"

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,613.

"Bai Jove! That's my tea, Blake!"

Blake was unable to reply, as he was pouring D'Arcy's tea down his thirsty throat. But all of a sudden he began to splutter wildly, and the teacup dropped on the table with a crash.

"Gr-ir-ir-irg!"

"Bai Jove! What's the mattah?"

Blake spluttered and spluttered, and glared at the swell of St. Jim's.

"You silly ass!" he howled.

"Gweat Scott!"

"You funny idiot!"

"What evah is the mattah, deah boy?"

"What do you mean by having salt in your tea?" roared Blake.

"Salt!" said D'Arcy blankly.

"Crooo-ghoogh!"



"New House rotters have been here! My hat!" exclaim wall. But the document in Figgins' fist was gone. In its pl

Arthur Augustus stared blankly at the broken teacup. It had left a trail of spilt tea and a sediment of salt on the tablecloth.

"Bai Jove! Lowthah, you ass, if you have been playin' twicks with my tea——"

"I haven't, ass!"

"Somebody has been puttin' salt in my tea. How vevy fortunate that Blake dwank it instead of me!" said Arthur Augustus.

"Fortunate, was it, you shrieking ass?" yelled Blake.

"Yaas, wathah! I wegard is as vevy lucky indeed. I might have dwank it myself, you know!"

"Oh, you—you—you——" Words failed Blake, and he rushed out of the study, to wash his briny mouth under a tap.

Monty Lowther tasted his tea very suspiciously. It was salt!

"Let your tea alone, you chaps," said Lowther. "This funny merchant has been salting it while we were looking out of the window!"

"Walkah, bai Jove!"

"Is anything the matter, Mouther?" asked Master Walker, blinking at Lowther.

"You funny chump!"

"Eh?"

"What have you put salt in the tea for, you silly dummy?"

"Certainly, Mouther. I hope we shall be very chummy!"

"Did you put salt in our tea?" yelled Manners.

"Yes, thank you; I will have another cup."

"I—I suppose he did it," said Tom Merry



Lowther. Tom Merry & Co. stared at the trophy on the wall. On the table was a brief message pencilled on the cardboard mount!

slowly. "He looks too big an idiot to be playing tricks; but—"

"Pewwaps somebody slipped into the study while our backs were turned, deah boys. We were sevewal minutes at the window," said Arthur Augustus mildly. "Did you see anyone in the passage as you came, Hewwies?"

"No!"

"Howevah, it is poss. Bai Jove, what's that?"

Arthur Augustus had taken the loaf from the plate. Under the loaf was a slip of paper, and on the paper was scrawled in pencil:

"This study is played out! Rats!"

"That's Kerr's fist!" shouted Lowther. "Kerr's been here! He's hanging about the

House somewhere. I knew it—was that Scots villain who bagged the document in the Common-room!" Lowther grasped Walker by the shoulder and shook him. "Look here, you deaf idiot—"

"Eh?"

"Did somebody come into the study while we were hanging out of the window?" roared Lowther. "Did you see him put that note under the loaf?"

"Eh? Yes; I saw him!"

"Why didn't you stop him, you howling ass?"

"Eh?"

"Br-r-r-r-r! Was it a chap with freckles on his chivvy?"

"I did not see any winkles."

"Not winkles, idiot—freckles!" roared Lowther.

"Oh, yes!"

"That was Kerr, then!" said Tom Merry. "What a nerve! We hadn't our backs turned for more than two minutes. And that dummy hadn't sense enough to speak, of course! Fancy the dummy sitting there like a stone imago while Kerr put salt in our tea! Why didn't you call out, Walker?"

"Impossible!"

"What?"

"As you are still in the study, Sherry, you could not have fallen out," said Walker, with a look of surprise. "What do you mean?"

"Bai Jove! Not much good askin' him questions! I wathah think he is a born idiot!"

"Is that the new chap?" asked Herries.

"That's the merchant!"

"What have you got him here for, Gussy?"

"We are lookin' aftah the howlin' ass by Mr. Waitton's wequest, Hewwies. But, weally, I shall be vevy glad when Mr. Waitton comes in and takes him off our hands!"

And D'Arcy's comrades fully concurred.

CHAPTER 11.

Very Mysterious!

JACK BLAKE came back to Study No. 6, and he snorted emphatically when he learned of the surprising visit Kerr had apparently made to the study.

Blake agreed that it was utterly idiotic of Walker to have sat silent while Kerr played his tricks, and he added the further opinion that it was equally idiotic of Tom Merry & Co. to let a New House bouncer play tricks just behind their backs.

Blake was still delivering this opinion emphatically when Albert Adolphus Walker jumped up.

"Excuse me," he said. "There is something on your back!"

"My back!" ejaculated Blake.

Walker passed his hand over the back of Blake's jacket, and held up a small card, with a bent pin attached.

The juniors all stared at it. On the card was scrawled in pencil:

"The champion ass at St. Jim's, bar none!"

Blake gazed at the card as if mesmerised.

"How—how—how did that get on my back?" he stuttered.

"Bai Jove! It's Kerr's fist!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Lowther. "Who's the

THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,613.

idiot now? You let Kerr stick that on your back without seeing him!"

"I—I didn't! I couldn't have! Where was he, then?" Blake fairly stuttered. "I—I—I— Look here, if that New House rotter is hanging about the House, let's rouse him out and scalp him! Come on!"

Blake, breathing wrath, rushed from the study. Tom Merry & Co. rushed after him. To be braved in their own House by a New House fellow in this manner was the limit.

They rushed for the stairs. Levison and Cardew were chatting on the lower landing, and Blake shouted to them,

"Has Kerr passed you?"

"Kerr? No," said Cardew, with a stare. "Is Kerr here?"

"Yes. Mind he doesn't pass."

"What-ho!" said Levison.

Tom Merry & Co. scattered through the passages, hunting for Kerr.

Several other fellows joined in the search. But there was no trace of the elusive Kerr. If he was still in the School House he had concealed himself very effectually.

The juniors returned to Study No. 6 at last, red and warm and cross.

The sound of a deep snore greeted them. Albert Adolphus Walker sat in the armchair with his eyes closed, snoring deeply.

"Asleep again!" snorted Lowther.

"Look there!" yelled Blake, pointing to the looking-glass.

Upon the glass was daubed in chalk:

"MORE RATS! THE SCHOOL HOUSE IS PLAYED OUT!"

"He—he—he's been here again!" stuttered Tom Merry helplessly.

"And that sleeping beauty here all the time!" shouted Lowther. "By Jove, I'll wake him up!"

He rushed towards the junior in the armchair. Just as he bent over him, Albert Adolphus yawned and sat up suddenly. The top of his head came into violent contact with Lowther's chin, and the Shell fellow staggered back with a fearful howl.

"Oh, ow! Ah! Yah! Oh!"

Master Walker rubbed the top of his head.

"Dear me! I have knocked my head against something!" he exclaimed. "Have I been asleep? Is anything the matter, Moulder?"

Lowther rubbed his chin, and looked daggers at the cheerful Albert Adolphus.

"I shall slaughter him!" said Lowther wildly. "I know I shall! There'll be a dead deaf idiot found in this House soon!"

"Eh?"

"I'm fed up with him!" howled Lowther.

"Railton can get somebody else to look after his prize idiot! I've had enough!"

"Patience, dear boy! Railton will be in soon, and we can hand him ovah," said Arthur Augustus. "As a mattah of fact, he is wathah twyin'. But where can that wottah Kerr be hidin' himself?"

"I should very much like to take a walk about the school, Sherry," said Master Walker. "Perhaps you will be kind enough to guide me."

"Any old thing!" grunted Tom.

"No; I do not sing, I am sorry to say. I can play a solo on a violin if you like."

"I weally do not know how that fellow will get on in this school!" said Arthur Augustus, with

a deep breath. "I feah that his Form-mastah will find him wathah twyin' in class. I twust he will not be put into this study."

"He will go out jolly sharp if he is!" growled Herries.

"Gussy ought to be glad he's come, though," said Monty Lowther, recovering his good-humour—a sign that a humorous effort was coming.

"Bai Jove! Why, Lowthah?"

"Because you're not the biggest duffer at St. Jim's now, old scout!"

"You uttah ass—"

"If you are ready, my dear Sherry—" muttered Master Walker.

"Oh, come on!" said Tom.

Master Walker left the study with the captain of the Shell.

Arthur Augustus, a slave to considerations of noblesse oblige, followed.

Manners and Lowther exchanged glances.

"I've had enough," said Manners.

"Same here!" said Lowther. "I don't want to kill him, but I feel that I shall if I see any more of him. Let's have another look for Kerr. The beast must be hiding somewhere, as he hasn't got away."

Quite a crowd of the Fourth and the Shell were still hunting for Kerr of the New House.

The news that the trophy in the Common-room had been destroyed roused the School House fellows to great wrath. But though they hunted high and low, they did not find the Scots junior, and the fellows on the watch on the door declared that he hadn't passed them.

Where Kerr had concealed himself was a baffling mystery, and the search was given up at last, with most of the searchers in a state of intense exasperation.

Meanwhile, Tom Merry and D'Arcy, manfully sticking to their troublesome charge, walked him into the quadrangle.

They had agreed to look after the new boy till Mr. Railton came in, and they were going to do it. But they had never been quite so eager to see their Housemaster before.

Master Walker's affliction of deafness could have been borne sympathetically if he had not been a thoroughly exasperating fellow in every other way. But he was.

"What is that building?" asked Walker, swinging round his umbrella to point to the clock tower. He persisted in carrying his umbrella. As he swung it round it collided with Arthur Augustus' beautiful silk hat and sent it flying.

"Dear me! Have I knocked something over?"

"Oh, my hat! My toppah!"

Arthur Augustus plunged frantically after his hat.

"Allow me!" gasped Walker, and he rushed after the hat and fielded it with his umbrella.

"There! I've caught it for you, Charley!"

He held up the hat triumphantly, stuck on the end of the umbrella.

Arthur Augustus gazed at the hat, and gazed at the smiling, cheerful face of the youth who presented it to him stuck on the umbrella.

Never had the repose which stamps the caste of Vere de Vere been put to so severe a test.

But Arthur Augustus did not slaughter Albert Adolphus on the spot.

With a great effort, he mastered his homicidal tendencies. He reached out and took the hat, and said:

"Thank you vevy much, Walkah!"

"I'm so glad I was able to catch it for you, Charley!"

Arthur Augustus did not speak again. He was trying to smooth the ghastly gash in the hat.

"Hadn't you better leave your umbrella indoors, Walker?" asked Tom Merry, wondering whether his head would be the next to suffer.

"Eh?"

"You don't want an umbrella on a dry day!" shouted Tom.

"I'm sure Charley wouldn't cry," said Walker. "Charley and I are going to be great friends."

"Oh crikey!"

Tom Merry gave it up, and Albert Adolphus walked on with his two friends, pointing at objects of interest with his umbrella, and keeping Tom Merry and D'Arcy in a perpetual state of breathless dodging.

CHAPTER 12.

Spoofed!

THE new boy at St. Jim's was attracting general interest by this time, though he seemed quite unconscious of it.

Fellows stared at Tom Merry's companion from all sides, and a cheeky gang of fags of the Third followed them about, grinning.

D'Arcy minor, Levison minor, Reggie Manners, and two or three more of the Third, haunted the footsteps of the trio, heedless of the severe glances Arthur Augustus gave them from time to time.

The news of the egregious Walker having spread, fellows joined Tom Merry in order to look at him, and hear him talk, and to watch his guides dodging his umbrella. It was agreed on all hands that St. Jim's had never seen a new merchant quite like this before.

"What is that building?" asked Walker, stopping and pointing to the New House with his umbrella, which Tom Merry just dodged as it swung round.

"That's the New House!" gasped Tom.

"Eh?"

"The New House—rotten old casual ward!" said Tom, for the benefit of Figgins and Fatty Wynn and Redfern, who had joined in the procession.

"Bow-wow!" said Figgins. "I say, have you seen Kerr this afternoon, Tom Merry? I hear that he's been in your House."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the New House juniors. "Where's the giddy trophy gone?"

"Are these nice boys New House boys, Sherry?" asked Walker.

"Yes; that is, they're rotters belonging to the New House!" growled Tom. "Let's get on, for goodness' sake! We don't want half the dashed school around us!"

"What rot!" chuckled Cardow. "Give him his head! He's entertainin'."

"Please take me to see the New House, Sherry!"

"Yes, do!" grinned Figgins. "We'll be glad to see you School House bounders in our House! We'll send you home sooted and glued!"

"We'll send Kerr home like that when he's found!" granted Tom Merry. "He's still hiding in the School House somewhere—Hallo, Monty! Have you found him?"

"No!" growled Lowther, coming up. "Must have hooked it out of a window, I think."

"I say, Railton will be in soon!" said Manners. "Let's shove that funny merchant into his study and leave him there."

"Good idea!" said Tom.

(Continued on the next page.)

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"Yaas, wallah! I weally considah that we have done our duty."

"Come on, Walker!" shouted Tom, taking Albert Adolphus' arm. "Yah! Keep that broolly away from my nose, you mad idiot!"

"I am so sorry, Sherry!"

"Oh, you dummy! Come on!"

"Certainly!" said Walker, starting towards the New House.

"Not there, fathead! We're going into our House!" roared Tom.

"Yes; I am going to see the New House. Perhaps Stiggins will be kind enough to show me over it, if you do not wish to," said Walker, blinking at Figgins.

"Pleased!" said Figgins. "Come on!"

Tom Merry hesitated. He was glad enough to hand the terrible Walker over to Figgins, but—

"No larks, Figgy, on a new kid!" he said.

"Not a bit!" said Figgins. "We'll treat him like a chum—honour bright!"

"Good, then! Take him, and welcome!"

"Come on, old scout!" said Figgins.

"One moment, Sherry!" said Master Walker, fumbling in his pockets. "I have a note for you."

"A what?"

"A note. It was written in the study by the young person in freckles when you left me there. Perhaps I should have handed it to you before."

"You howling ass!" roared Tom. "You let Kerr give you a note, and never said a word! Oh, you dummy!"

"Eh?"

"I don't want the dashed note! Keep it!"

"It is very important," said Master Walker, blinking at him as he extended a folded sheet of paper. "It contains a very interesting communication, which will delight you all, I am sure."

Tom Merry took the note, and Walker hurried away quickly with Figgins and Fatty Wynn to the New House.

Tom opened the paper, and read what was written therein. It contained a pencilled message in Kerr's handwriting.

Tom's eyes grew wide as he looked at it.

He gasped.

"Bai Jove! What is it, deah boy?" exclaimed Arthur Augustus, as Tom Merry stood staring at the pencilled note as if it mesmerised him.

"Some New House cheek?" said Monty Lowther. "Let's see it!"

Tom Merry held up the note speechlessly, and the juniors crowded round to read it.

And this is what they read:

"Dear Little Innocent,—Next time Railton telephones to you from Wayland, make sure that it is Railton on the phone, and not Figgins putting on a bass voice.

"Next time you go to meet a new kid at the station, make sure that it's really a new kid, and not G. F. Kerr of the Fourth Form!

"Bow-wow!

"Yours affectionately,

"GEORGE FRANCIS KERR

"(Alias Albert Adolphus Walker)."

"Kerr!"

"Kerr, bai Jove!"

The name of Kerr, in every tone of surprise and stupefaction, was repeated by the crowd of School House juniors.

"Kerr!" said Cardew. "By gad!"

"Spoofed!" yelled Lowther.

"Spoofed!" gasped Tom Merry.

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"Kerr!" said Arthur Augustus dazedly. "But it wasn't Kerr! Kerr hasn't wed hair, and he doesn't weah glasses—"

"That's why Walker had red hair and wore glasses!" yelled Levison. "Ha, ha, ha!"

"Kerr!" yelled Manners. "We left him asleep in the Common-room! He wasn't asleep! He removed that document! He punched my nose on purpose! I knew he did!"

"He biffed my chin on purpose!" yelled Lowther. "I'll scalp him! Kerr all the time! You ass, Tom—"

"He has wuined my toppah, the awful wottah, and—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I—I—I—" Tom Merry stuttered. "It—it was Figgins who telephoned, not Railton at all! Oh, that's why the beast's gone back to the New House before Railton comes in! Oh, my hat! After him!"

The Terrible Three rushed furiously to the New House, with a crowd of fellows at their heels.

It had taken them some minutes fully to realise that it was Kerr—the shining light of the N.H.J.A.D.S.—who had played the part of Walker, the new boy. It was the most astounding spoof in their experience.

And the Terrible Three had a consuming desire to collar the spoofer and bump him hard.

They came up to the New House with a rush and a yell, and found the doorway crammed with New House juniors, roaring with laughter.

All the New House were aware of the joke now. The prestige of Figgins' study was more than restored.

A derisive yell greeted the School House juniors.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Spoofed!"

"Who's Cock House of St. Jim's?"

"New House! New House! Yah!"

Tom Merry & Co. charged furiously at the steps. They were rolled down again at once.

The doorway was crammed with laughing New House fellows, and there was no chance.

With feelings too deep for words, the heroes of the School House limped away, followed by a roar of merriment.

"Bai Jove! Look there!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus, pointing to the window of Figgins' study.

The School House fellows looked up.

Figgins' study window was open, and there stood Figgins, Kerr, and Fatty Wynn in a row.

Kerr was waving a red wig with one hand and a pair of spectacles with the other.

Tom Merry & Co. gave one another sickly looks and limped away.

There was no doubt about it this time—the School House had been fairly done, and for once Tom Merry & Co. had to hide their diminished heads while the New House rejoiced, and the hero of the hour was the junior who had succeeded so amazingly in spoofing the School House.

THE END

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THE HORSE HUNTERS!

By Martin Clifford.

The Runaway!

THUD, thud, thud!
Clatter, clatter!
"Hallo! What's on?" exclaimed Bob Lawless.

The Cedar Creek fellows were chatting about the gateway after morning lessons, when the galloping hoof-beats came to their ears. All eyes were turned up the trail at once.

There had been a thaw, and the trail was wet and muddy, and clotted with half-melted snow. Along it the leafless larches dripped with water.

From the timber in the distance a riderless horse dashed into view. Down the trail it came, with tossing head and floating mane and stirrups clattering against the girths.

Frank Richards uttered an exclamation.

"It's the black horse, Bob!"

"By gad! So it is!" said Vere Beauclerc. "Stand out of the way, you fellows!"

The Cedar Creek fellows were crowding back into the gateway. The maddened horse would be passing the gates in a couple of minutes, and it was highly dangerous to be in the path.

That the animal was pursued was evident, though the pursuers had not yet come into sight.

"That's Poker Pete's horse!" said Gunten. "I've seen him in Thompson."

"My popper's horse," answered Bob Lawless. "Poker Pete sold him to my popper a few days ago."

Gunten grinned.

"I guess it was a bad bargain for your popper, then. That beast's too savage to ride. I wouldn't have given ten dollars for him."

"Worth three hundred if it wasn't for his temper," remarked Chunky Todgers.

"Popper gave three-fifty," said Bob.

"He won't see it again, then," grinned Gunten. Clatter, clatter, clatter!

The runaway was crashing past the gates, his nostrils steaming and his eyes rolling and showing the white. The schoolboys crowded farther

back, but the horse was past in a flash, and thundering on down the trail towards the distant town of Thompson.

"The ranchmen are after him, I guess," remarked Bob. "Oh, by thunder!" he added, as the pursuers came in sight from the timber. "Poker Pete and Euchre Dick. They're after popper's gee!"

The two horsemen were riding hard, but their mounts were not equal in speed to the fugitive stallion. Poker Pete's swarthy face was dark with anger. His companion held a lasso ready for a cast, if he came near enough. Poker Pete gave a momentary glance of savage hatred at Frank Richards & Co. as he galloped by. The two riders vanished down the trail on the track of the runaway.

Bob Lawless whistled.

"Poker Pete wants his gee back," he remarked. "Looks to me like hoss-stealing, after he's sold him to popper."

Frank Richards nodded. He stood looking in the direction in which the horsemen had disappeared, with a wrinkle in his brow.

"I say, that's jolly queer," remarked Chunky Todgers. "That's the hoss you let loose the other day, Richards, when Poker Pete was beating him, isn't it?"

"That's it," said Frank.

"And it hasn't been caught?"

"Not yet."

"Did old man Lawless buy it while it was still a runaway, then?" asked Chunky, in astonishment.

"You've hit it!"

"By gum! That was chucking dollars away, and no mistake!"

"Not quite," answered Frank quietly. "My uncle bought it from Poker Pete so that the brute couldn't ill-use it any longer. He took the chance of its not being caught."

"But what's Poker Pete hunting it for, if he's

sold it?" asked Tom Lawrence. "He doesn't usually do things for nothing."

"I guess I can answer that!" growled Bob. "If Pete ropes that hoss in, he doesn't mean to deliver it at the Lawless Ranch. He means to sell it down the valley. You see, he was rather mad at having to sell the horse—popper offered him that or a horse-whipping, by way of choice, because he was a brute to the poor critter. He had to sell."

"Then I guess I hope he'll get his hoss back!" sneered Gunten. "I reckon a man can beat his horse if he likes."

"You would!" grunted Bob.

The dinner-bell rang, and the Cedar Creek fellows went to the schoolhouse; those of them who stayed for dinner at the school.

"Last day at school this week, Franky," said Bob, tapping his cousin on the arm. "We're going to join in hunting the gee-gee to-morrow, if he's not caught to-day."

"He won't be seen again in the Thompson Valley if Poker Pete ropes him in," said Frank. "The rotter means to steal the horse if he can."

"I guess he won't rope him in, though."

The schoolboys went in to dinner. Frank Richards was thoughtful and troubled. It was through him that Rancher Lawless had forced the brutal cardsharpener to sell the black horse, taking the law into his own hands to that extent. Poker Pete had been bitterly enraged, and Frank could see now that the sharper had determined to hunt for the animal and recover him if he could, in spite of the forced sale.

As the animal was a runaway, and would be captured, if at all, far afield in the timber or the plains, it would be difficult, if not impossible, to bring the theft home to the cardsharpener.

It was not agreeable to Frank to feel that he might have been the cause of his uncle losing so considerable a sum as three hundred and fifty dollars. Mr. Lawless was one of the wealthiest ranchers in that section of British Columbia, but the sum was a large one, nevertheless.

Bob Lawless guessed what was in his cousin's mind.

"All serene, Franky," he said, when they came out after dinner. "That cardsharpener won't catch him in a month of Sundays. And we're going to take a hand to-morrow—and we'll do the trick, you bet."

And Frank could only hope that his chum would turn out to be a true prophet.

At Close Quarters!

"LOOK out!"

It was a sudden yell from Harold Hopkins, in the gateway. The Cockney schoolboy came running in with a startled face.

The schoolground was covered with boys and girls, and they all looked at Hopkins as he dashed in.

"What's up?" called out Dick Dawson.

"Look out—the 'orse!" yelled Hopkins, and he bolted for the porch of the lumber schoolhouse.

Clatter, clatter, clatter!

Crack!

The crash of hoofs was accompanied by the sudden ringing of a pistol-shot. As startled eyes turned on the open gateway, the black horse was suddenly seen there, with tossing mane and rolling eyes. The animal was evidently in a maddened and frantic state.

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"By gad! Run for cover!" shouted Beauclerc. Thud, thud, thud!

There was a rush for the shelter of the house and the other school buildings. Seldom or never had a crowd scattered so suddenly in the school-ground.

Frank Richards & Co. turned in the porch. The black horse careered across the wide enclosure, and, stopped short by the high palisade on the other side, snorted and foamed and careered round within the walls, looking for a way of escape.

In the gateway appeared Poker Pete, alone now. His companion had evidently dropped out of the chase. Evidently the runaway had been headed off at Thompson, had eluded his pursuers in the timber, and doubled back. His flight had led him back to the lumber school.

Poker Pete had a still-smoking revolver in his hand, and an expression of concentrated fury was on his swarthy face.

Frank gritted his teeth.

"The hound! He's trying to shoot the horse!" he shouted.

"About the best thing to do with that mad brute!" gasped Gunten.

Crack!

Poker Pete fired again as he rode in through the gateway. There was a squeal from the black horse. The bullet had gone very close. In maddened excitement the animal reared and crashed his hoofs at the palisade. Then he resumed his wild careering round the enclosure.

Bob Lawless gave a sudden cry.

"Molly! Molly!"

It was Molly Lawrence, one of the pupils in Miss Meadows' class. The girl had run behind the schoolhouse, and was now running round to the porch to get indoors.

"Quick, Molly!" yelled Tom Lawrence.

He ran out to meet his sister, but Frank Richards was first. The girl, in her fear and excitement, stumbled and fell to the ground, almost in the path of the runaway, who was dashing back towards the gates. Her peril was so terrible that it almost froze the crowd in the porch.

Frank's heart beat wildly as he ran to her. He did not look towards the black horse, but the beating of the oncoming hoofs sounded in his ears like thunder. He reached the girl and caught her up.

Thud, thud! Snort!

With a desperate effort Frank Richards threw the girl upon his shoulder and raced back to the porch.

"Look out, Franky!"

The black horse had turned, with savagely gleaming eyes, on the boy almost in his path. The great jaws were open and the cruel, white teeth bared to tear him, as the ferocious animal closed in on him from behind.

Bob Lawless sprang forward, with a stool in his hand caught up from the porch. He hurled it straight at the lunging head of the black stallion, and there was a squeal of pain from the animal as the stool struck fairly on the black muzzle. The beast swerved round, neighing shrilly, and headed for the gates again.

Bob and Tom Lawrence grasped Frank and dragged him into the porch. Molly Lawrence slid to her feet, almost fainting.

Tom Lawrence hurried his sister into the house, most of the others following, for the porch was open and unprotected if the savage animal

came that way. But the black horse had found the gateway once more, and was dashing right into the open country.

Crack!

Poker Pete fired again as the animal disappeared. But the bullet missed, and the card-sharper rode away through the gates.

"By gum," murmured Bob, "that black horse is dangerous, Frank! He may do some harm if he's not roped in!"

"It's that brute's fault!"

"I guess so, more or less!"

The chums went to the gates and looked out. The black horse had vanished, but Poker Pete could be seen riding away at a moderate pace. The cardsharper had evidently given up the hunt, for the time, at least.

On the Trail!

"YOU'LL come to-morrow, Cherub?" Bob Lawless asked, as the three chums quitted Cedar Creek School after lessons had finished that day.

Vere Beauclerc hesitated.

"I'll bring you a pony from the ranch," went on Bob, with a laugh. "You won't let my popper make you a present of one, but you'll let me lend you one—eh?"

"Right you are!" said Beauclerc, colouring and laughing. "I'll be ready to-morrow morning, then. What time?"

"Half an hour after sun-up, at the fork of the trail," answered Bob.

"Right-ho!"

The chums parted at the fork and Beauclerc disappeared in the dusk, on the path through the timber to the lonely shack by the creek. Frank and Bob rode on to the ranch, in a thoughtful mood.

The chums arrived at the ranch, and at supper Mr. Lawless was told of the happenings at the lumber school that morning. The rancher knitted his brows over the story.

"Shooting at my horse, was he?" he exclaimed. "I'll see Mr. Poker Pete about that. What was he after the horse for at all, the horse-thief? By thunder, I guess I'll put it to him plain!"

"We're thinking of taking the trail after him to-morrow, uncle, as it's a holiday," remarked Frank Richards.

The cloud cleared from the rancher's brow, and he burst into a laugh. He seemed amused at the idea.

"You're welcome to try, my boy," he answered. "Don't get too near his hoofs or his teeth—not that you're likely to!"

And the rancher laughed again.

The next morning Frank and Bob came down early and in a determined mood. They wanted very much to show Mr. Lawless that they were not quite so helpless on the trail as he supposed.

Three ponies were saddled, and Bob Lawless packed provisions for the day into the saddlebags. The hunt was to last till successful, or until darkness drove them home.

As they rode down the trail, Bob leading the spare horse for Vere Beauclerc, they came upon Billy Cook, the ranch foreman, and a Kootenay cattleman, riding in the same direction as themselves.

"Hallo!" shouted Bob. "Whither bound, William?"

Billy Cook looked round with a grin as Bob and Frank came up.

"After the gee-gee," he said. "That your game?"

"You bet!"

"Haw, haw haw!"

"Oh, not so much of your cackle, Billy!" exclaimed Bob testily. "Do you think we can't follow a trail or throw a lasso?"

"I guess I'll eat all the hosses you catch this hyer day, Bob!" answered the foreman. And the Kootenay grinned.

"Where are you looking for him?" asked Frank.

"He's been seen again in the woods near Cedar Creek," replied Cook. "I guess we shall spot his trail somewhere!"

"That's our way."

"Then I'll have your company—and mind, I'm going to eat all the hosses you catch!" grinned the ranchman.

"Rats!" retorted Frank laughingly.

They trotted on through the timber, and found Vere Beauclerc waiting at the fork of the trail. The remittance man's son was in good time. He vaulted lightly into the saddle of the led horse, and rode on with the party.

"You've brought a rope," remarked Bob, with a glance at the lasso coiled up over Vere's arm. "Yes; I've practised a good bit with the lariat," said Beauclerc. "I: I get a chance at the black horse it may come in useful!"

Billy Cook chuckled.

"Hallo! Look out!" shouted Frank suddenly.

There was a sudden thudding of hoofs on the trail. The black horse burst from the dripping larches and dashed by the party, vanishing down the trail with a thunder of hoofs.

"By gum!" gasped Billy Cook.

"Somebody's after 'him!" exclaimed Bob.

"Poker Pete, by thunder!"

The cardsharper came thundering down the trail in hot pursuit. Billy Cook drew up in the middle of the trail, and Poker Pete was forced to draw rein. There was a grim expression on the cattleman's face.

"Stop's the word!" he rapped out.

"Let me pass, you fool!" shouted Poker Pete.

"I guess not," said the ranchman coolly.

"You're after Mr. Lawless' hoss. Let up!"

"Hang you! It's my hoss!"

"I reckon I was a witness to the sale, and saw three hundred and fifty of the best paid over!" grinned Billy Cook. "You'll turn right round and get back, Mister Poker Pete, or else I'll have you off that hoss o' yours in a brace of shakes, and I guess I'll dust up the trail with your carcass!"

The cardsharper ground his teeth.

Frank Richards & Co. had halted, prepared to back up the ranch foreman if necessary. But it was not necessary. Poker Pete, with a curse, wheeled his horse and rode back up the trail. He did not care to try conclusions with the brawny ranch foreman.

"I guess that lets him out!" remarked Billy Cook, with a grin. "Now I'm after that gee! You youngsters had better keep clear!"

He dashed away after the vanished stallion, followed by the Kootenay. Frank Richards & Co. rode after him at once.

"We're on in this scene, I guess!" remarked Bob Lawless.

"You bet!" said Frank tersely.

"Poker Pete's routed the gee-gee out for us!" grinned Bob. "I suppose the brute was feeding

in the wood. He looks a bit thin, though. He'd have come near starving but for the thaw. Don't you throttle me with that rope, Cherub, old scout!"

Beauclerc laughed. He had taken his coiled lariat in his hand ready for use.

The three schoolboys rode hot on the trail, and they were close behind Billy Cook and his companion as the latter dashed out of the timber upon the plain.

Hunting the Wild Horse!

"THERE he is!"

Bob Lawless pointed with his riding-whip.

Away on the rolling plain, as they rode out of the timber, the black horse came in sight, grubbing in the half-melted snow for food. Billy Cook and the Kootenay had separated, the latter taking a devious course, to head off the escape of the black stallion. But the black horse was not so easily headed off. He raised his head and glared round, and broke at once into a gallop, making for the distant hills at a great burst of speed.

"By gad, what a ripper!" exclaimed Vere Beauclerc, his eyes glistening as the horse hunters galloped in pursuit.

"Isn't he a beauty?" agreed Frank Richards. "I don't fancy we shall run him down on these gees."

They rode hard in pursuit, but did not gain an inch on the black horse. Indeed, it was easy to see that if the fugitive had not been content with keeping his distance, he could have shown a clean pair of heels to the pursuers.

Thud, thud, thud! the hoofs rang on the squashy plain, wet and muddy in the thaw.

"Thunder!" exclaimed Billy Cook suddenly. "There's a chance!"

He waved his coiled lasso wildly.

Far ahead, following a scarcely marked track across the plain, was the post wagon from Thompson, driven by Kern Gunten, that being Gunten's Saturday task. The Swiss looked round, and drew in his pair of horses as he heard the thudding and shouting in the distance.

The black horse was heading straight for the post wagon when it appeared from behind a ridge in the plains. Kern Gunten jumped up in his seat, and waved his whip and shouted, to drive back the runaway into the hands of the pursuers. The black horse swerved and darted off at almost right angles to his previous course.

"Good!" muttered Billy Cook.

He swerved and galloped across to cut off the runaway. The others rode hard on his track. A good half-mile had been saved by the turning aside of the runaway, and the hunters made the most of it.

With a desperate spurt, Billy Cook rode within cast of the black horse. His lariat uncoiled in the air as it flew. The noose struck the tossing head of the runaway, and fell. The ranchman muttered something between his teeth. The cast had missed.

Whiz!

Vere Beauclerc, still riding at top speed, made his cast as the disappointed ranchman dragged in his rope. There was a wild squeal from the runaway. Vere Beauclerc had had better luck. The noose settled fairly over the tossing head and tautened.

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"Roped!" yelled Bob Lawless, in exuberant delight.

The black stallion stopped for a second, and then sprang away fiercely. The rope ran to its full length like a flash. But the end was secured to Vere's saddle. He rode on hard, or his pony would have been dragged over by the furious efforts of the runaway to escape.

"Caught!" shouted Frank.

"By gum!" panted Billy Cook.

The ranchman had his lasso ready again, and he rode on rapidly. Fiercely as the runaway was trying to escape, the pull of the rope slackened him, and Billy Cook easily made a second cast. His rope settled over the head of the black stallion.

"Our hoss, I reckon!" he panted.

"Looks like it," grinned Bob Lawless. "Good old Cherub!"

"Give him rope, younker!"

"All right!"

Beauclerc understood what was required. The black horse, roped in by two lassos, whirled round, and charged savagely at his captors. He came on with foaming jaws and glistening teeth, and it was a sight well calculated to shake any but the strongest nerve. But the black horse had no chance now. Beauclerc and the ranchman rode widely separated, and the two taut lassos held the runaway a prisoner at equal distances from each.

There, helpless at the ends of the ropes, the mad fury of the horse was spent in frantic rearing and plunging and savaging. The hunters watched him grimly from a safe distance.

The Kootenay threw him a third rope, and the black stallion was more helpless than ever.

The hunters turned homeward. Three lassos constrained the captured horse to follow, and still the horsemen rode wide, and gave him plenty of room. There was a long ride before the hunters, for the chase had taken them many a mile afield.

The black horse, fatigued and almost exhausted at last by its vain resistance, trotted on sullenly in the midst of its captors. The animal was still saddled and bridled, as when it had escaped from Poker Pete days before, and it must have been considerably irked, which perhaps accounted in part for its savageness. But there was no doubt that the brute had a savage temper, and it was not surprising that the card-sharper of Thompson had failed to subdue it.

Bob Lawless doubted whether the animal would ever be of much use now he was caught. The vicious gleam in his eyes was unmistakable, and Bob, though a fearless rider, would not have cared to mount him—if it had been possible.

"By gum!" said Billy Cook. "I reckon Poker Pete had a bad bargain in that hoss, and he ought to have been glad to get rid of him. I guess I wouldn't sit that critter for a month's pay doubled!"

"Same here!" confessed Frank Richards.

It was yet early in the afternoon when the cavalcade arrived at the Lawless Ranch. Mr. Lawless came out to meet them, with great satisfaction in his looks at the sight of the captured stallion.

"You've got him, Billy?" he exclaimed.

Billy Cook looked rather shamefaced.

"I never got him, boss," he answered. "It was young Beauclerc that roped him in."

"By Jove!" exclaimed the rancher, in astonishment.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Bob Lawless, feeling



No sooner was Vere Beauclerc in the saddle than the black stallion, in his surprise and rage, jumped several feet clear of the ground. He came down on his forefeet, his heels behind beating the air. But the daring rider was not unseated.

that it was his turn to laugh now. "Cedar Creek comes out on top, dad."

"He looks a savage brute," said Mr. Lawless, eyeing the sullen animal with critical eye. "I can't say I like his looks. He may have to be shot, but we'll give him a chance."

"Shot?" exclaimed Vere Beauclerc.

"I guess so, my lad, unless he improves in temper. There's the very devil in his eye," said the rancher. "Shove him in the corral now, Billy, and see that he has plenty to eat. Keep the rope on him."

"You bet!"

The three ropes had to be left on the black horse after he was led into the corral, for, at the slightest attempt to approach him, his teeth were bared, and his eyes glittered with fury.

Mr. Lawless shook his head as he regarded him over the fence.

Vere Beauclerc was thoughtful as he went into the ranch-house with his chums to a late lunch.

"Penny for 'em, Cherub!" exclaimed Bob, clapping him on the shoulder.

Beauclerc coloured.

"I—I was thinking I'd like to try and ride that horse, Bob."

Bob Lawless whistled.

"Off your chump?" he asked. "Billy Cook wouldn't try it now, and he's the best hand with a horse in the Thompson Valley."

"Still, I'd like——"

"Popper wouldn't let you," said Bob, with a shake of the head. "He doesn't want you to be taken home in pieces."

The matter was dropped with that, but before Beauclerc left the ranch he went round to the corral to take a last look at the black horse. The animal had an enclosure of the corral to himself, and he was trampling restlessly, the ropes trailing about him.

"It's a splendid brute!" Beauclerc said. "I believe I could handle him, Bob."

"You're jolly well not going to try!" said Bob. "We can't spare you, Cherub. Here, come on!"

Bob marched his guest away.

Demon's Master!

VERE BEAUCLEERC was waiting at the fork of the trail, as usual, for his chums on their way to school on Monday morning. He gave them an eager look as they came up.

"How is he?" he asked.

"The popper?" asked Bob. "Same as usual, my tulip!"

"I—I was speaking of the black horse!" stammered Beauclerc.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Bob. "Still thinking you'd like to try your hand at taming him—hey?"

"I'd like to try, certainly!"

"Can't be did," answered Bob. "Billy Cook tried him yesterday, and he was glad to get out of the saddle with a whole skin!"

"He's awfully savage, Beau," said Frank Richards. "I'm afraid there's nothing for it, but——"

Beauclerc knitted his brows.

"Is he to be shot?" he asked.

"I'm afraid there's nothing else to be done."

"Oh!" exclaimed Beauclerc.

"My dear old Cherub," said Bob Lawless, "it can't be helped! The brute had a vicious temper to begin with, then Poker Pete was cruel to the poor wretch, and then it's been free nearly a week, and grown quite wild. The popper won't have three hundred and fifty dollars shot if he can help it, you can bet on that. But the brute can't be trusted an inch!"

Beauclerc nodded.

"I suppose Mr. Lawless knows best," he remarked.

"You bet!" agreed Bob.

Beauclerc did not speak again on the subject, but he was very thoughtful on the way to school; and he remained in thought all day.

After school, when he walked home with his chums, he did not say good-bye as usual at the fork in the trail.

"Do you mind if I come home with you this evening, Bob?" he asked, colouring.

"Jolly glad, of course!" said Bob at once. Then he grinned. "You want to see the black gee-gee again before the execution—eh?"

"Ye-es."

"Well, jump on behind," said Bob. "Can't walk all the way, but my pony can carry double."

"Thanks!"

The three schoolboys arrived at the ranch together in the deep dusk. Vere Beauclerc had a cordial welcome: he was always welcome at the ranch. His first question was on the subject of the black stallion.

Mr. Lawless shook his head seriously.

"I'm afraid there's only one way, my boy," he said. "The men have not even been able to get the saddle off him. He is quite vicious. But I shall give him another chance in the morning, before he is shot!"

"The Cherub thinks he could ride him, dad!" chortled Bob Lawless.

The rancher smiled.

"I'm afraid I couldn't permit you to try, Beauclerc," he said. "Your father would scarcely approve of it!"

"I don't think he'd mind, sir!" said Beauclerc eagerly. "He knows how I can handle horses! Oh, Mr. Lawless, if you'd let me try, I feel sure I could—" He broke off, flushing hotly. "Don't think I'm a conceited ass, sir. It isn't that. But I lived among horses when I was in England; I rode almost as soon as I could walk, and—and—"

"I couldn't let you try, my lad. I'm responsible for your safety while you are here!" said the rancher.

"My pater wouldn't object, sir; I'm sure of that."

"I guess he would," smiled Mr. Lawless. "I certainly shouldn't allow Bob to go near him!"

"Well, the Cherub's a better man with a gee than I am, popper," said Bob honestly. "I've seen him with the cattle sometimes; he's got a way with them. Still, I don't think he could ride the Demon!"

"But—but it's worth trying if you're thinking of having him killed, sir," urged Beauclerc. "Will you let me try, Mr. Lawless, if I get my father's permission? I'm not afraid!"

"No, but I'm afraid for you," said Mr. Lawless. "Your father could never agree."

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"He knows how I can ride, sir. Will you let me, if I bring you his written permission? He has seen the horse several times."

Mr. Lawless looked rather perplexed.

"Well, I guess I can leave it to your father," he said.

"Good!" exclaimed Beauclerc joyfully. "Lend me your pony, Bob, and I'll get off to the shack at once!"

Beauclerc rode away from the ranch in a few minutes.

An hour or so later he returned with a note from Mr. Beauclerc. The rancher read it, and frowned thoughtfully. It was brief, and to the point.

"Dear Mr. Lawless,—My son can ride any horse in Canada, and he has my full permission to try any horse on your ranch.—Yours,

"LASCELLES BEAUCLERC."

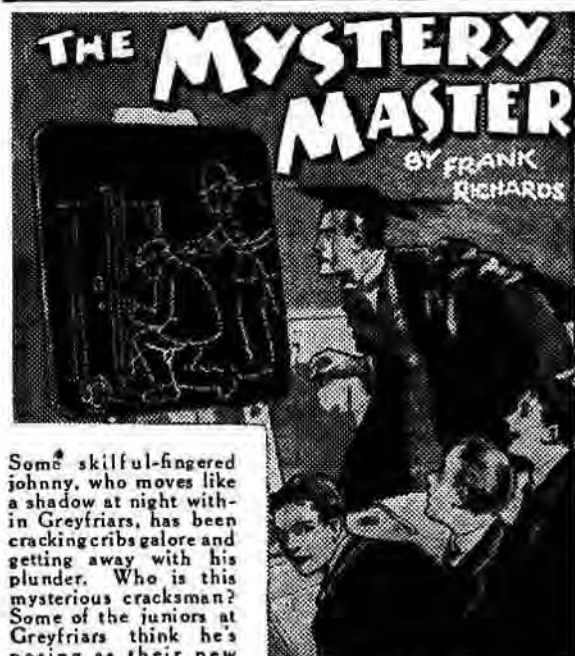
"By gosh, that's plain enough!" said Mr. Lawless. "Well, well, your father ought to know what risks you can take. I'll keep my word; you can make the attempt in the morning, my lad."

"Oh, thanks!" exclaimed Beauclerc in delight.

Frank and Bob were not so delighted, however, as they marched Beau off to share their room for the night. They were filled with apprehensions for the morrow.

They were up early in the winter morning, Beauclerc in merrier spirits than his chums had ever seen him in before. He was looking forward to the contest with the greatest confidence and satisfaction.

After breakfast the chums left the ranch-house and made for the corral, Mr. Lawless and Billy Cook accompanying them. The rancher was looking thoughtful and troubled. He had given



Some* skilful-fingered johnny, who moves like a shadow at night within Greyfriars, has been cracking cribs galore and getting away with his plunder. Who is this mysterious crackman? Some of the juniors at Greyfriars think he's posing as their new Form-master! You'll thoroughly enjoy reading this full-of-thrills yarn, starring Harry Wharton & Co. of Greyfriars.

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his permission, but he was full of forebodings. The look of the black stallion, viewed over the fence, was not promising either. He threw up his head and his eyes gleamed at them, and the savage mouth opened with a flash of white teeth.

"Beau," exclaimed Frank Richards, "you can't ride—"

"I can, old chap, and I'm going to!" smiled Beauclerc.

"Cherub, old man—" murmured Bob.

Beauclerc, unheeding, went to the corral gate. Mr. Lawless called to him.

"Beauclerc, you're running a fearful risk!"

"I think not, sir," said the schoolboy confidently. "My father doesn't think so!"

"I can't believe you can sit that horse, my boy. But I shall keep my word. I shall keep my rifle handy, too!" The rancher had his gun in the hollow of his arm. "You're a plucky lad, but reckless. But if you succeed in riding that horse, Beauclerc, he's yours. You'll be the only one in this section who can do it, and the horse will be yours!"

"Oh, sir!" gasped Beauclerc. "I—I—"

"You can't refuse," said the rancher, with a smile. "If you cannot ride him, he will be shot to-day. But I fear—"

With a firm hand the Cherub threw aside the bar at the gate and then strode into the corral. The rest watched breathlessly, Mr. Lawless keeping his rifle handy. The black horse started and turned savagely at the schoolboy's footsteps. Beauclerc threw the bar into position behind him. He was shut up in the corral now, alone with the savage horse.

His chums scarcely breathed as he advanced upon the animal with a firm step and a steady eye. There was a shrill neigh from the black stallion, and he made a sudden rush right upon the iron-nerved lad. Beauclerc leaped aside and caught at a trailing rope as he did so. The horse was swung round on the lasso, so sharply that he came to his knees in the grass. Before the animal could even move, Vere Beauclerc was in the saddle.

The horse leaped up as if electrified. The black stallion, in his surprise and rage, jumped several feet clear of the ground, coming down on his forefeet, his heels behind beating the air.

But the daring rider was not unseated. He lay back till his head was lashed by the tossing tail, and even at that terrible moment his feet found the dangling stirrups, and his hands caught the reins. The next moment the horse was rearing on his hind legs, as if about to fall backwards, and Beauclerc's face was buried in the tossing mane.

And then followed such a struggle as the onlookers had seldom or never seen before. The black horse raced round the corral, tearing, plunging, turning, careering, in frantic efforts to unseat his rider. He scraped against the wall of the corral, but Beauclerc's leg was always out of the way; he rolled on his back in the grass, but Beauclerc was always off his back just in time, and in the saddle again the moment the horse righted.

The onlookers stood spellbound. Truly, the remittance man's son was one of those born to "Witch the world with noble horsemanship."

"Stand clear!" shouted Beauclerc suddenly.

The black stallion made a furious rush at the gate of the corral. High as it was he rose to the

(Continued on page 36.)



THE EDITOR'S CHAIR

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

HALLO, Chums! Our old friend Martin Clifford is certainly hitting the high spots with his stories, and next week he carries on the good work. Readers have often said in their letters that it's a marvel how Martin Clifford has kept up week after week for thirty-two years. The answer is that our author takes a great interest and no little pride in his work. The characters he has created are real-life schoolboys to him. They are not merely so many figures only identifiable by their names. Each one has a separate and distinct character, born of Mr. Clifford's close study of human nature. That is why the St. Jim's characters live, why they talk naturally, and behave like real schoolboys. And that is the reason why the GEM has remained such a great favourite over so many years!

"THE SNOB'S LESSON."

This story brings into the limelight Leslie Clampe, of the New House. Clampe, besides being a black sheep, is a good deal of a snob. He is very proud of his rich relations, and when one of them, a young Naval lieutenant, is to pay a visit to St. Jim's, the whole school knows it. Clampe's swank in itself is a subject for humour among the other fellows; but what does "get their goat" is when he "chips" Redfern, the scholarship boy, because Reddy's brother is only an ordinary seaman. That is sheer snobbery—snobbery which ultimately recoils on Clampe's shoulders, for when his cousin does turn up, Clampe gets the shock of his life. The visitor is not a smart Naval officer, but an ordinary sailor, and a peculiar specimen at that!

"YELLOW VENGEANCE!"

It sounds a grim title for the next adventure of Frank Richards & Co., but actually the story is not grim—it is rather funny. What happens, however, is not so funny to Kern Gunten, the rogue of Cedar Creek! He plays a spiteful trick on Yen Chin, and not unnaturally the Chinese is out to get his own back. But the revenge of the Asiatic schoolboy takes an alarming course—for he threatens to "killce Gunttee," as he puts it! Frank Richards & Co. cannot believe that he means it, but Gunten takes him seriously. The rogue is scared stiff by Yen Chiu's threats, which seem to be the only object of the Chinese's vengeance. Look out for this grand yarn.

"JACK DRAKE MAKES GOOD!"

As you will gather from the title, Jack Drake wins through after his hard struggle for the Founder's Scholarship. The only drawback to his success is that poor old Estcourt, beaten by Jack in the exam, will now have to leave the Benbow. Drake would very much like to help Estcourt, but, short of resigning the school in his rival's favour, and losing his own place in the school, Jack is helpless. He is far from guessing, however, the totally unexpected turn future events are to take!

As usual, Lowther, Kerr, and Blake will be on parade with their bright and breezy contributions, completing another splendid number. Don't forget to order early, chums. So-long!

THE EDITOR.
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SHOULD HE MAKE SURE OF WINNING THE SCHOLARSHIP BY "CROCKING" JACK DRAKE—OR TAKE THE RISK OF LOSING IT AND HAVING TO LEAVE THE BENBOW? JACK'S RIVAL HAS TO CHOOSE!



Jack Drake stepped to the counter to get the sugar, and Estcourt drew the little phial from his pocket. To let fall a few drops into Drake's coffee—what could be easier? It would "crock" Drake for the exam—and ensure his own success!

The Rivals!

"DRAKE!"

"Hallo! Is that you, Estcourt?"

Jack Drake peered through the gloom on the deck of the Benbow.

Drake had been hard at work in his study with Dick Rodney, and he had come up on deck to breathe the fresh air of the river. His work was done. So far as he had been able to prepare for the examination on the following day, he had prepared for it. He was tired, but he was hopeful. And, in spite of the fatigue, the Fourth Former was feeling well, and unexpectedly cheery.

It was near bed-time for the St. Winifred's juniors, and there was hardly anyone on the dusky deck. Lights gleamed from study windows on the waters of the Chadway, flowing silently past the hull of the old warship. Ashore, the woods lay dark under a glimmer of stars.

Drake started as Estcourt's voice, in low tones, suddenly broke upon his ears.

In the gloom Estcourt's face showed up dim and pale. Drake looked at him very curiously. Frank Estcourt was his most dangerous competitor for the Founder's Scholarship. Drake knew that if he could beat Estcourt, he had little to fear from the others. He knew, too, that Estcourt had reasons as powerful as his own for wishing to be successful.

"I—I came up to speak to you," said Estcourt, in the same low tones.

"Go ahead, old scout! You're looking a bit off colour," said Drake. "You've been going it too hard. No good fagging yourself out the

The VOICE of the TEMPTER!

By Owen Conquest.

day before an exam. I've been going rather easy to-day."

Estcourt passed his hand over his brow wearily. There was no doubt that he had been working hard—too hard.

"What do you think of your chances to-morrow, Drake?"

"Good, I hope!"

"I believe it's between us."

"I think so. I suppose you're going to beat me if you can," said Drake, rather ruefully. "You're the only one I'm afraid of. I suppose it will go to the best man."

"I've seen a paper you did for Mr. Packer yesterday," said Estcourt. "It made me feel rather sick."

"Why?"

"Because I couldn't have done it myself."

The winning of the Founder's Scholarship rests between Jack Drake and Estcourt—and it means everything to both of them. So it is that Jack's rival is tempted!

"But you don't mean to say you think I shall get ahead of you on the papers to-morrow, Estcourt?" exclaimed Drake.

"I—I'm afraid so."

"That's good news for me. But you always seemed to have so much confidence in yourself," said Drake, in wonder. "But you're feeling run-down from too much sapping. You'll feel differently in the morning."

Estcourt shook his head.

"I know I couldn't have done that paper you did," he answered. "It beats me. I can't understand how you've pulled up like this. You were always a slacker."

"Well, not exactly a slacker," said Drake, with a smile. "But swotting isn't in my line, and that's a fact. Rodney's helped me a lot. I should never have had a chance but for Rodney."

"I know it—hang him!"

Drake started.

"Estcourt, what the dickens—"

"I—I'm sorry; I didn't mean that," muttered Estcourt hurriedly. "But—but this is an awful blow to me. I've been swotting for two whole terms. I've worked as I believe no fellow ever worked before—and all for nothing! You come in late, and get ahead of me. And you never were my equal in class—not till lately, anyhow. I—I suppose you've got more brains than I have."

"Oh, rot!" said Drake.

He blinked at Estcourt in the dusky shadows. Estcourt was always a quiet, self-controlled fellow, little given to betraying emotion of any sort, and Drake was astonished to see him giving way like this.

"I'm just a plodder," went on Estcourt bitterly. "Just a plodder—plodding on while you were playing the goat—and as soon as you put your mind to it, you shoot ahead. It's rotten—it's unjust. The schol belongs to me by right. I've worked for it, and you haven't."

"I've put in some very hard work the last few weeks, old fellow," said Drake, hardly knowing what to reply. He could see that Estcourt was in a mood of nervous tension, and his tone was almost soothing as he spoke. "I've given up everything else to work—especially since my father came down to see me."

"You're going to beat me to-morrow."

"I hope so, of course."

"You don't need it as I do. I've simply got to bag it," said Estcourt. "I've counted on it; my people have counted on it. I've looked on it as mine. I always knew I could beat Vane, Rawlings, and Norman, and the others. I thought at first I should beat you. Drake, I—I'm going to ask you a favour."

"Go it!"

"Keep out of it to-morrow."

"Wha-a-a-at?"

"I can't afford to lose," said Estcourt, in a trembling voice, peering at Drake's astonished face. "I can't! If you knew my—my circumstances at home, you'd understand. I never talk much to the fellows, but you must have some idea—how poor we are. If I get the schol, I stay at St. Winifred's; otherwise, I have to go."

"It's the same with me," said Drake. "We're poor now, and my staying at St. Winny's depends on the schol. If I were going in for it just for fluff, I'd stand out, really. But I can't afford to."

"It's not so much to you as to me. The money that goes with it—I want that. It's wanted—to send my young brother to school."

"Oh gad!"

"I had a right to count on it; and then you came wedging in, spoiling all my chances. I know I'm asking a lot—more than any fellow has a right to ask. But—but if I lose it, I don't know what I shall do!" Estcourt's voice broke.

"I'm sorry, old fellow," said Drake. "If I could help you, I would. But—but I've promised the people at home, and—and I must do the best I can for myself. If I don't land the schol, this is my last term at St. Winny's. Be reasonable, Estcourt."

"I knew what you'd say," he answered. "I knew it was no good. I've humbled myself for nothing. I knew how it would be."

"I'm sorry!" muttered Drake awkwardly.

Estcourt stood breathing hard.

Drake made a movement at last.

"I think I'll go down," he said. "I'm really sorry, Estcourt—"

"Oh, leave me alone!"

Drake made no answer to that. He walked away in the shadows, and went down to his cabin. Frank Estcourt moved to the side, and stood leaning on the rail, staring down at the dark waters of the Chadway, in the depths of which two or three glimmering stars were reflected. His thoughts were black and bitter. A light touch on the shoulder made him start and turn quickly.

The Tempter I

"FEELIN' bad, old top?"

It was Vernon Daubeny of the Shell who stood beside Estcourt in the gloom. His tone was very cordial as he spoke, but there was a peculiar glitter in his eyes as they rested on Estcourt's pale, troubled face.

The Fourth Former gave him a savage look.

"Leave me alone!" he muttered.

"Feelin' bad?"

"Yes, confound you!"

"I heard your little pow-wow with Drake a few minutes ago," said the dandy of the Shell coolly.

Estcourt's white face flushed, and he clenched his hands. His humiliation, which had been useless, after all, was known, then—and known to the fellow he liked least at St. Winifred's—Vernon Daubeny, the chief of the bucks.

"You were listening, you cad!" he muttered fiercely.

Daubeny shrugged his slim shoulders.

"I'd come up to look for a quiet place to smoke," he answered. "You were talkin' within a few feet of me; I couldn't help hearin'. Don't get your rag out, kid; I'm sorry for the fix you are in. You think Drake's goin' to beat you to-morrow?"

"That's my business!"

"I don't want the cad to win the schol any more than you do, Estcourt."

"That's pretty well-known," said Estcourt, with a sneer. "Everybody knows you've put as many obstacles in Drake's way as you could. You've mucked up his work every time you had a chance. He's coming out ahead, all the same."

"Which is all the worse for you."

"I know that."

"I might be able to help you," said Daubeny in a low voice.

"You!" Estcourt gave a scoffing laugh. "You help a chap for an exam! Goodness only knows how you squeezed into the Shell yourself! Don't talk rot!"

"Oh, I don't mean in the way of sappin'," said Daubeny contemptuously. "That's not in my line. But—you've said that with Drake out of the way, you'd clear the board."

"Well, he won't get out of the way to please me!" snapped Estcourt. "I suppose he wouldn't if you asked him, either."

"He might be got out of the way."

"What the thump are you driving at?"

"Suppose he wasn't fit when the exam came off—suppose he was quite off-colour and wasn't up to work?" said Daubeny, sinking his voice to a whisper. "Suppose he fozzled over his paper and landed bottom instead of top?"

Estcourt drew a quick breath.

"You—you mean—some more of your rotten tricks?" he muttered.

"Well, isn't it a rotten trick—Drake wedgin' in and baggin' the schol you've been swotting for for a couple of terms?" asked Daubeny. "If you could put him off his form, and bag the schol

from him, what's the odds? All's fair in love and war—and this is a case of war, isn't it?"

"Well?"

"Suppose somebody gave Drake somethin' to-morrow mornin'—"

"Give him what?"

"Somethin'—somethin' quite harmless and tasteless—say, in his tea. No harm done; by the evenin' the dear boy is as right as ever. But for the best part of the day he's sleepy and slack—lack of concentration, and all that!"

Estcourt's face went white.

"You—you awful villain!" he muttered.

"My dear man, don't call me names!" said Daubeny easily. "I've got no personal interest in the matter; I'd like to see Drake dished—I own that."

"And that's your motive!"

"Well, never mind my motive. I'm offerin' to do you a good turn. You want the schol and the cash that goes with it. You've got a better right than Drake."

"I—I think I have—"

"Well, then, see yourself through, with my help."

There was a long silence.

Estcourt had clenched his hand as if to plant it full in the handsome, sardonic face of the tempter. But he unclenched it again.

The temptation had found a lodging-place in his heart.

He was not quite himself: his nerves were in rags. He was only too conscious that he had overdone his work, and that he had thereby lessened his chances of success. He had worked so hard; he had counted so surely upon success, and it seemed to him, in his bitter mood, cruelly unjust that all should go for nothing.

He listened while the voice of the tempter ran on:

"It's easy enough. You're in Drake's Form; you can get at him without the least suspicion. Who'd suspect you of such a thing? A little dose—quite harmless—in his tea at brekker—"

"Oh, be silent!" muttered Estcourt in a tortured voice.

He stared blankly at the swift-flowing water below, his face white and his brows wrinkled.

The silence was long, but it was Estcourt who broke it at last in a trembling whisper:

"It's impossible!"

Daubeny smiled. He was sure of his man now. Estcourt was not speaking of the baseness of the scheme, but of its possibility.

"It's easy," repeated Daubeny. "A little dose—"

"Where could I get the stuff, you fool?"

"I've got it."

"You?"

"In my study," smiled Daubeny. "I can answer for the stuff."

"It's harmless?" muttered Estcourt.

"Do you think I'd give it to you if it wasn't? I'm not lookin' for a change of quarters—from St. Winny's into a reformatory!" grinned Vernon Daubeny. "I tell you Drake will never know what's been the matter with him."

Another long silence.

Estcourt drew himself up from the rail at last and stood facing the dandy of the Shell, breathing hard and deep. Daubeny looked at him with a smile. He was sure of his man; the temptation was too strong. Whether assent or dissent was on Estcourt's lips he hardly knew himself. But as he met Daubeny's smiling glance, all

indecision left him. He made one quick stride towards the tempter.

"You villain!" he breathed.

"I— Oh!"

Estcourt raised his hand; his clenched fist shot out suddenly, as if he were afraid to give himself time to think.

Crash!

The blow was unexpected. Daubeny was smiling over his supposed victory when the Fourth Former's knuckles struck him full in the face.

The Shell fellow went reeling and spinning, to crash down on the planks of the deck.

Estcourt stood staring at him with glittering eyes, his hands still clenched.

There was a patter of footsteps as Egan and Torrence came running across the deck.

"What's up?" gasped Torrence.

"Oh!" panted Daubeny. "Oh! Collar that cad—collar him! Oh!" He gasped and spluttered.

His chums made a movement towards Estcourt, but they shrank back from his dangerous look. Without a word to them Estcourt turned and disappeared into the shadows.

"What's the row, Daub?"

"What's happened?"

Egan and Torrence both spoke together. But they received no explanation from Vernon Daubeny, only a string of savage mutterings, which it was fortunate for Daub that there was no master or prefect at hand to hear.

At the Crossroads!

"ESTCOURT!"

Dick Rodney uttered the name, in a sudden, startled exclamation. Rodney was in the doorway of Study No. 8, talking to Drake, who was within, when Estcourt came below.

The sight of Estcourt's face startled him. It was white and strangely set, and the eyes were glittering almost feverishly.

"What's up, Estcourt?" exclaimed Rodney, in concern and some alarm. "Are you ill?"

Frank Estcourt did not reply. He strode on, without looking right or left, and went into his study and slammed the door.

Rodney stared, after him blankly, and then turned into Study No. 8, to meet Jack Drake's inquiring glance.

"Something's up with Estcourt," he said.

Drake nodded. The scene on the deck, of his strange talk with his rival for the scholarship, was fresh in his mind.

"He's a bit upset, I think," he said. "I saw him on deck a quarter of an hour ago."

"He's been swotting too hard, the ass!" remarked Tuckey Toodles, who was eating chestnuts in the study. "He thinks he's going to bag the schol. Not against this study—what?"

"I hope not," said Rodney, with a smile.

Tuckey Toodles shook his head emphatically. "I put my money on Drake," he observed. "If I hadn't been sure of Drake baggin' it I should have gone in for it myself."

"Which would have made it a dead cert—for some other study!" grinned Rodney.

"Oh, I could do it on my head!" said Tuckey with cheery confidence. "But it's all the same if old Drake bags it, I can rely on you to do the decent thing, can't I, Drake, dear old scout?"

"That depends," said Drake, laughing. "What do you call the decent thing, Tuckey?"

"Well, there's some ready cash with the schol, and, of course, you will stand a tremendous spread out of that—"

"Guess again!"

"If you're going to be mean, Drake—"

"I am, old top, so far as the schol goes," said Drake. "The money will be handed to my father if I bag it."

Tuckey Toodles gave a snort of disgust.

"I don't call that playing the game," he said. "If you're going to be so horrid mean, Drake, I can't give you my best wishes for to-morrow."

"Then I'll try to struggle on without."

"Come to think of it, I'm not so jolly sure you will bag it," said Toodles. "I rather fancy Estcourt's chances."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I don't see anything to cackle at. I wonder whether Estcourt will stand a spread? He's jolly close with money, I've noticed. I wish now I'd entered for the thing myself," said Tuckey Toodles peevishly. "I should have made sure of the oof then."

There was a sound of knocking along the passage, and then the voice of Dudley of the Fourth was heard. Dudley was Estcourt's studymate in Study No. 4.

"Let me in, Estcourt! What the thump have you got the door locked for?"

Apparently there was no reply from Estcourt, for Dudley's voice went on, crescendo:

"You cheeky ass! Let a chap into his own study!"

Then there was a sound of the study door opening. Dudley entered his quarters and Estcourt came out at the same moment. He wanted to be alone, but solitude was hard to find below. Rodney and Drake both caught sight of him as he passed Study No. 8, going towards the ladder.

Their faces were grave as they glanced at him. Frank Estcourt was looking anything but his usual self.

Unconscious of their grave glances, Estcourt went on deck again. There was a murmur of voices from the poop, where some of the masters were enjoying the evening together. Estcourt tramped in the opposite direction, and stopped by the bowsprit, where he was alone in the darkness at last.

He pressed his burning forehead to the cool, hard wood to calm it. His temples were throbbing. The unhappy boy's mind was in a torment.

He had answered Daubeny's temptation as it deserved to be answered, but that, unhappily, was not the end of it. The miserable thought remained in his mind.

After such long and sustained effort to prepare himself for the examination, the wretched conviction had rushed upon him that he had no chance of success. It was not an unusual experience on the eve of a difficult and long-expected test. But it was not only "nerves" in Frank Estcourt's case. He was a clever lad and a hard worker, but he knew his own limitations. He knew that he could not have done the paper which he had seen lying on Mr. Packe's desk, and which Drake had apparently done with ease.

It was hard—bitterly hard—to be beaten at the post, as it were, after so long a struggle, and by one who, as he supposed, had not taken nearly so much trouble to win success. It was not only defeat and disappointment; he could have borne those with fortitude. But he could not afford to lose the scholarship. He was fighting for others, as well as for himself, and if he failed they had to suffer.

And Daubeny had offered a way out. In his usual mood, Estcourt would never have entertained the dastardly suggestion for a moment. But he was not in his usual mood now; his nerves were in a twitter, and he seemed to see everything about him through a false medium. It was fear of himself, fear of wicked irresolution in the presence of temptation, that had called forth the blow that stretched Daubeny on the deck. It seemed that that was escape for him—that it ended the matter for good and all. But it was not ended.

He knew that Daubeny would still help him if he asked it—that he would not count a blow sufficient reason for giving up his scheme of vengeance upon the junior he hated.

There was a footstep close at hand. Dick Rodney came up through the shadows.

"Estcourt—"

"Let me alone."

"My dear chap, Lovelace sent me—it's bedtime. Lovelace is waiting to put out the lights," said Rodney mildly.

"Oh! I—I forgot! Thanks!" stammered Estcourt.

He hardly knew whether to be thankful for the interruption or not. He went below with Rodney, and turned into his hammock.

But he did not sleep.

Long after lights were out, and steady breathing announced that the Fourth Formers round him were sleeping peacefully, Estcourt lay awake, with eyes staring into the gloom.

In the dark hours of the night he was still wrestling with his temptation.

True Blue!

VERNON DAUBENY was early on deck the following morning. There was a red mark on Daubeny's cheek, where a heavy hand had fallen the previous night, and Daubeny rubbed it occasionally and scowled. A glitter shot into his eyes when he caught sight of Frank Estcourt on deck, staring away across the river with knitted brow. Estcourt had been up before rising-bell, and his heavy eyelids showed how little he had slept.

He glanced round at Daubeny's step, and the buck of the Shell stopped. He had been thinking of Estcourt, wondering whether the reflections of the night would have brought a change of mind. Estcourt did not, as a matter of fact, know himself. His mind was still haunted with miserable indecision.

Daubeny came towards him at last, but warily.

"You look pretty seedy this morning Estcourt," he remarked.

DETECTIVE KERR INVESTIGATES.

Solution:

KERR: Westby incriminated himself when he said he saw the time by the town hall clock at twenty to eight. "In Town To-Night" was certainly on the wireless then, but Westby forgot that—as Grundy said—the fog was so thick in Wayland that you could not see your hand before your face. In that case, how did Westby see the dial of the town hall clock—across the road and high up in the air? Questioned, Westby seemed "foggy" as to which shop he had been in, and he finally owned up. So all the St. Jim's suspects were—luckily—exonerated!

"I'm feeling seedy."

"Not in much trim for a stiff exam—what?"

"No."

"Well, I wish you luck, dear boy."

Daubeny rubbed the mark on his cheek as he spoke. His wishes towards Estcourt just then were not very amiable. But he did not forget the purpose he had in view. He tapped his waistcoat pocket.

"It's there, if you want it," he said, in a low voice; and with that he strolled away.

"Daubeny!"

Estcourt was calling him back. He turned at once.

"Yes, old bean?"

"You—you're sure it does no harm?" faltered Estcourt, without meeting his eyes.

"Quite."

"I—I'm not going to use it. But—but give it to me."

"Certainly."

Daubeny drew closer, and passed a little black phial into the Fourth Former's hand. Estcourt slipped it into his pocket. Egan and Torrence came on deck, and Daubeny strolled away airily to join them.

Estcourt stood by the rail, moodily staring at the river, till he was called to breakfast.

He contrived to drop into the next seat to Jack Drake at the breakfast table. His opportunity had come!

Once, twice, his hand touched the phial in his pocket.

It was harmless—Daub had said so—and he would never dare to lie, with so much risk to be run. It was harmless: only it would "croak" Jack Drake for the examination, which was to take place that morning, while the other fellows

were in the Form-rooms. But the opportunity passed. When the juniors left the breakfast table, the little glass-stoppered phial was still in Estcourt's pocket, unused.

"Best of luck, old chap!" Rodney said to Jack Drake, as he left him on the deck, and went to the Form-room with the Fourth.

"Thanks! I'm going to win!" answered Drake cheerily.

Daubeny & Co. came along, and Vernon Daubeny glanced curiously at Estcourt. He wondered whether the junior had acted yet. Estcourt did not meet his eyes, however, and he went into the Shell-room with his chums, still in doubt.

The dozen fellows whose names were down for the examination were free till ten o'clock. Jack Drake walked up and down the deck in a thoughtful mood. He stopped when Estcourt joined him.

"Feeling all right, Estcourt, this morning?" he asked.

Estcourt smiled, a rather ghastly smile.

"Oh, ripping!" he answered. "Don't I look it?"

"Well, you don't exactly, old fellow. Pull yourself together, before old Packe comes to gather us in to the slaughter," said Drake, with a smile.

Estcourt breathed hard.

"There's plenty of time yet," he said. "Come down and have a cup of coffee in the canteen."

"I don't mind," answered Drake.

The two juniors descended together to the canteen amidships, where Mr. Capps served them. Drake sat at a little table, and Estcourt handed over the coffee cups.

It was an opportunity again; and he had intentionally made it, hardly knowing what he intended to do.

But the phial was still in his pocket.

His heart was beating faster. This was his last chance, and he knew it. He must act now, or never. And still that haunting indecision tortured his mind. Drake sipped his coffee, and made a wry face.

"No giddy sugar," he said. "I'll get some."

And Drake stepped to the counter to get the sugar.

Estcourt drew the little phial from his pocket. It was easy—too easy. To let fall a few drops into the coffee, while Drake's back was turned—what could be easier?

Estcourt felt his head whirl for a moment. Then he stepped quickly away from the table.

The window was open close at hand, giving a view of the wide river, gleaming in the morning sunshine.

Estcourt raised his hand.

"Two terms," he muttered. "I've slogged for it for two terms, and now I'm throwing it away."

"What on earth—" exclaimed Drake, as he came back to the table with the sugar.

Estcourt's hand rose in the air. Whiz!

Something glassy and glistening shot from his hand through the open window, and splashed into the river.

Drake was gazing at his companion in astonishment.

"What's the game?" he inquired.

"Oh, nothing!" said Estcourt, with a bitter smile. "I've chucked away my last chance of winning what I've worked for—that's all!"

(Continued on page 36.)



The ARCTIC TREASURE HUNTERS

Meet Dick Dorrington & Co. and their pals of the Glory Hole. These lucky lads are members of the famous school ship—the Bombay Castle. In this great yarn they are sailing the icy seas-wastes of the Arctic. But there are plenty of fun and thrills for the boys of the floating school. Join in the fun right away!

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THE VOICE OF THE TEMPTER!

(Continued from page 34.)

He swung round on his heel, and strode out of the canteen.

"Well, my hat!" ejaculated Drake, utterly at a loss to account for the junior's words or actions. "Blessed if I don't think he's sapped till he's a little loose in the roof!"

He followed Estcourt to the deck; but the junior avoided him till Mr. Packe came to call his flock together. But Estcourt's face was calmer as he followed Mr. Packe with the rest. His temptation had been terrible, but he had won through. Whether he succeeded or failed, he at least had nothing to reproach himself with. He was calm, and even hopeful. And now that he was calm he was glad, with a deep thankfulness, that he had at last played the game, and that he could work without a crime on his conscience.

THE HORSE HUNTERS!

(Continued from page 29.)

leap, the rider making no effort to check him. Horse and rider soared over the gate, and came down on the open plain, and then the black horse broke into a furious gallop. Away over the plain went horse and rider, and in a few minutes they were out of sight.

"By gosh!" gasped Mr. Lawless.

"I never saw anything like it!" said Billy Cook. "He's got him—he's got him under. You hear me yaup. That gee knows his master now!"

Billy Cook proved to be in the right. Half an hour later, after a wait full of anxiety, there was a thunder of hoofs, and the black stallion came in sight again, with the schoolboy of Cedar Creek still firmly seated on his back. Vere Beauclerc's face was flushed, the perspiration thick on his brow, but his look was joyous. He rode the horse at top speed, swerved, and rode round in a circle, the animal obeying the slightest touch of the rein.

It was evident that Demon had been reduced to obedience. And the rider had never used a whip from first to last. The animal felt his master on his back, and he had exhausted his strength

That evening Vernon Daubeny glanced into Study No. 4 in the Fourth, and met Frank Estcourt's eyes inquiringly.

"Well?" he asked.

The answer was unexpected. It came in the form of a grasp on Daub's collar. He was spun round, and a boot was planted behind him, with terrific vim.

The injured buck let out a surprised howl, and twisted his head half-round.

"What's this for?" he gasped. "I—I thought—"

"It's for the meanest cad at St. Winny's!" panted Estcourt. "And if you don't keep out of my way in future, I'll slaughter you! D'you understand?"

Estcourt lent force to his remarks with another well-planted boot. Daubony went sprawling on his hands and knees. When he scrambled up he fled—with the knowledge that his last scheme against Jack Drake had failed—the final throw of the dice had decided against him.

Next Week: "JACK DRAKE MAKES GOOD!"

in vain resistance to the inevitable, till the realisation that it was inevitable was forced into the equine brain, and then the horse was conquered.

Beauclerc halted at last and jumped down. He rubbed the foam-flecked muzzle of his steed, and the cruel teeth were not bared now. He led the horse towards the amazed group.

"Well, carry me hum to die!" said Billy Cook; and that was all he could say.

"By gosh, you've done it, my lad!" said the rancher. "Who'd think that was the same horse? You've saved his life, Beauclerc, and he's yours!"

"I don't claim him, sir. I'm only too glad—"

"He's yours, my lad, and that settles it."

"I don't know how to thank you, sir," said Beauclerc softly. "I'll accept him with pleasure, of course, if—if you—"

"Now come in to breakfast," said the rancher. "You'll be late for school!"

"No fear! I shall ride to the school now!" said Beauclerc, with a happy laugh.

And when Frank Richards & Co. started for Cedar Creek, Beauclerc was riding the Demon—not much of a demon now in appearance. His chums congratulated him heartily, and Beauclerc's face was happier than they had seen it for a long time. It had been a fortunate day for him when he had joined the horse-hunters.

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