

SCHOOL STORIES of ST. JIM'S, GREYFRIARS and CEDAR CREEK!

THE
GEM
2^D

INSIDE.

"Checkmate To a Crook!"

By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

"The Rebels' Victory!"

By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

"The Study-Jumpers!"

By FRANK RICHARDS.





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 Bull himself! But keep your letter SHORT, and enclose if possible a photo of yourself for reproduction on this page. No photos can be returned.

A. H. Jardival, of Mon Desir, L'Islet, Guernsey, C.I., writes:

Who am I like? 5 ft. 2 in. in height. Eager to get on in class. Right wing at footer, usually 8th or 9th man in cricket XI (1st team both). 13 years of age. Please excuse the extra "t" in footer!

ANSWER: *Jameson of the Third is about your weight; plays on the right wing, goes in 8th or 9th, but bowls a "nifty" ball. And dashed if he didn't get a hundred lines from Mr. Selby last week for spelling cricket cricket! You must be brothers under the skin! They call Jameson "Jammy." Hope you get plenty of "jam," too, old chap!*

Eileen Thomas, of Wrexham, writes:

I'd like to know why you write on this page; I'm sure Manners is much more clever. I admire Manners more than anybody, but I think YOU are the nicest boy in the Fourth, and Gussy the most boring!

ANSWER: *I'm not sure whether I'm collecting a bouquet or a brickbat this time, but it seems clear that you don't "jall" for Gussy. Let me tell you Gus is a great chum to have—not clever, I admit, I believe nice people always stand up for their friends.*

Bernie Conant, of Turramura, New South Wales, Australia, writes:

I liked your page so much, I thought I would write and tell you. Do you like going to the movies? Who is your favourite actor? Mine is Tyrone Power. Why is there a feud between School House and New House? My favourites at St. Jim's are Levison, Talbot, Herries, and Monty Lowther. Give my special regards to Roylance, will you, please? Your really appreciative reader.

P.S.—Do you like the photo?

ANSWER: *Yes, I like the "flicks," especially when it's wet. I mean the weather, not the programme! I have no particular favourite among film stars. I must ask Figgins what the feud is about. Maybe we've been rubbing each other's noses in the dust for nothing. I've an idea it's because Figgins thinks he and his men are the cream of St. Jim's society, while School House men think that they are. Roylance thanks you, and sends his best regards. Sorry your snap was not quite suitable for reproduction.*

IMPORTANT NOTICE

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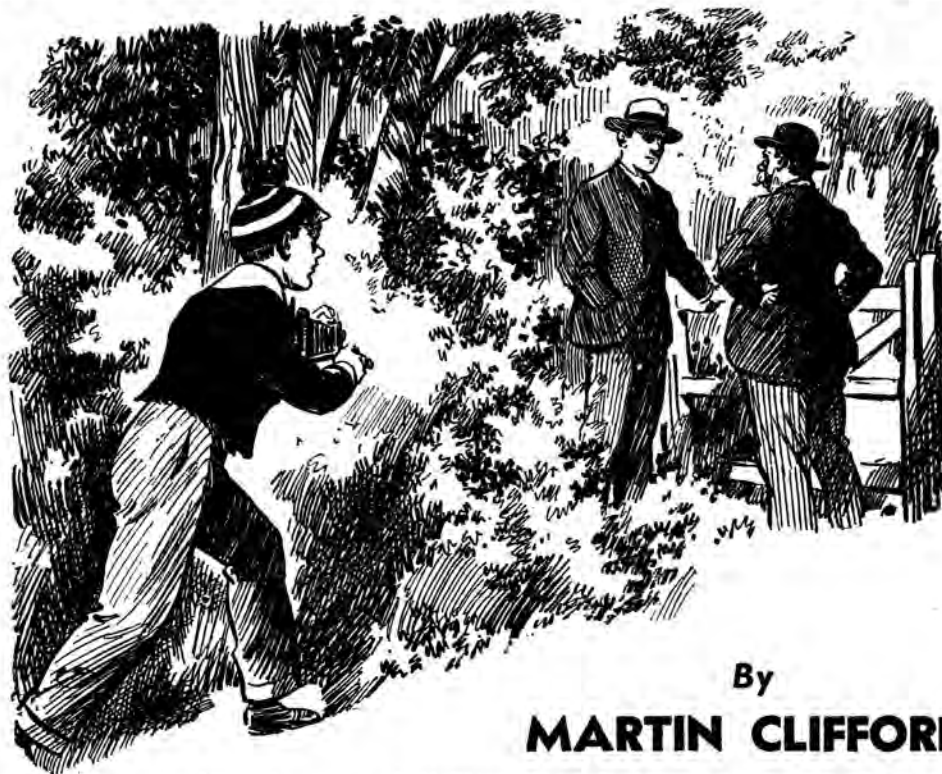
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ANOTHER GREAT NEW STORY OF ST. JIM'S, INTRODUCING TOM MERRY AND HIS CHUMS AND THE CROOK SCHOOLMASTER OF THE FOURTH!

CHECKMATE TO A CROOK!



By

MARTIN CLIFFORD

For a moment Mr. Silverson and Mulligan stood together by the gate. In that moment Manners' camera clicked.

GREAT NEWS!

"WEJOICE, you fellows!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

"What-ho!" said Jack Blake.

"Hear, hear!"

"Oh, jiminy!" said Baggy Trimble. "This is jolly good news!"

A crowd of juniors had gathered round the notice-board in the School House at St. Jim's.

Every face wore a cheery grin.

Something on that board seemed to have bucked the Fourth Form fellows tremendously.

Notices on the board did not generally have that effect. Sometimes they were interesting, as when they dealt with football matters. Sometimes they weren't, as when they stated that Monsieur Morny would be taking his French set in No. 8 at 3.15.

This, it was clear, was something special—nothing short of a notice by the Head that he was giving the school a whole holiday was calculated to bring those joyous grins to so many faces.

But it was even better than that, in the opinion of the group of Fourth Form fellows.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy smiled his most expansive smile. Blake and Herries and Digby grinned almost from ear to ear. Baggy Trimble chuckled. Levison and Clive and Cardew beamed. There was general rejoicing over that paper written in the scholarly hand of Dr. Holmes, the headmaster of St. Jim's.

"Wippin', isn't it?" asked Arthur Augustus.

"Ripping isn't the word!" said Blake. "It's gorgeous!"

"Tip-top!" said Herries.

"Best news this term, so far!" said Digby.

"Yaas, wathah!" chuckled Arthur Augustus.

Tom Merry and Manners and Lowther of the Shell came along to see what the rejoicing was about.

"What's up?" asked Tom. "You fellows look as if you've found your names up for the first eleven."

"Bettah than that, deah boy!" grinned Arthur Augustus. "That wat Silverson is goin' at last."

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"Oh!" exclaimed Tom.

He looked at the notice on the board.

It was quite a brief notice. The Head, probably, had not the faintest idea that it would cause such jubilation in the Fourth Form. To him, it was merely a matter of routine.

That notice stated that Mr. Lathom, the master of the Fourth, would be resuming his duties on Wednesday!

Such was the simple announcement that caused so many faces to beam!

But it meant much to the St. Jim's Fourth.

It meant that James Silverson, the temporary master who had taken Lathom's place while he was on the sick list, was going!

Mr. Silverson had been only a short time at St. Jim's. But in that short time, he had made himself about as unpopular as a master could be—he had fed the Fourth up to their back teeth!

Even Arthur Augustus, who had more than the ordinary share of the milk of human kindness, loathed Silverson with a deep loathing.

Tom Merry's face brightened as he read that notice. As a Shell fellow, he did not come under Mr. Silverson's rule, but he had had plenty of trouble with him, all the same.

"By gum, that's good!" said Tom.

"We shall have to celebrate this!" remarked Monty Lowther.

"Lathom would be flattered if he knew how much his Form wanted him back!" grinned Manners.

"It isn't that!" said Baggy Trimble. "It's Silverson going. He's been here only two or three weeks, but it seems like whole terms."

"It do—it does!" said Blake.

"He's whopped more in two weeks than Lathom in two terms!" said Baggy.

"And he's a rank outsider!" remarked Cardew.

"And a worm!" said Levison.

"And a bargee!" said Clive.

"And a tick!" declared Herries.

"And a swab!" said Digby.

"Yaas, watah! He is all that, and more!" declared Arthur Augustus. "I weally cannot think of anythin' bad enough to desewibe him! I am sowwy, Tom Mewwy, to entahtain such a vewy low opinion of a man who is related to you."

"Don't mind me!" said Tom, laughing. "He's only a distant relation—and I disown him, anyway."

"The fact is, the man is a wotah!" said Arthur Augustus. "Now he is goin', I don't want to wun the man down—but a wottener wotah and wat than Silvahson nevah bweathed."

"Hear, hear!"

"Three cheers for the Head!" suggested Jack Blake.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Hip, hip, *huwway!" chortled Arthur Augustus.

"Cave!" exclaimed Manners suddenly.

"Here's Silverson!"

"Oh cwikey!"

"Stealthy worm!" murmured Monty Lowther. Mr. James Silverson appeared on the spot quite suddenly. Nobody had heard him coming.

There was a sudden silence among the juniors.

The look on Mr. Silverson's cold, hard face, the glint in his greenish eyes, did not encourage merriment.

Silverson was going. But he was not yet gone. For two more days, the St. Jim's Fourth was

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under his sway. That was a very uncomfortable reflection, in view of the fact that Mr. Silverson had witnessed the rejoicing of his Form over that notice on the board.

His hard face was dark with anger.

It was natural, perhaps, that a master should be offended and displeased by such gladness on the part of his Form to see the last of him. Probably James Silverson did not realise that he was such a worm as the St. Jim's juniors considered him to be!

There was a moment of deep silence—which seemed very long.

"Well," said Mr. Silverson, at length, in his hard, sardonic voice. "You appear to have been reading something of a very gratifying nature on the board. May I ask you to point it out to me?"

Silence!

All the juniors knew that Mr. Silverson did not need to have it pointed out to him. Certainly no fellow was inclined to point it out.

"I am waiting!" said Mr. Silverson grimly.

Cardew spoke in his cool, drawing voice:

"We were feelin' rather glad, sir, to hear that Mr. Lathom had recovered. We were all so sorry that he was ill."

"Yaas, watah!" agreed Arthur Augustus. It was true enough that the juniors were glad that Lathom had recovered—though that, certainly, was not the whole cause of their satisfaction.

"Indeed!" said Mr. Silverson. "No doubt Mr. Lathom would be extremely gratified to learn that his recovery gave such pleasure in his Form. I doubt, however, whether that wholly explains what I have just witnessed."

Silence.

"I caught some remarks as I approached," continued Mr. Silverson. "May I ask, Cardew, to whom you referred as a rank outsider?"

"Figgins of the New House, sir!" said Cardew calmly. "All those New House men are outsiders."

Mr. Silverson breathed hard.

"I think," he said, "that I make no mistake in assuming that what I have witnessed was intended as a disrespectful demonstration directed towards myself. I shall not allow such disrespect to pass unpunished. Every Fourth Form boy present will go into extra school on Wednesday afternoon."

He glanced at Tom Merry sourly.

"As I have no authority over Shell boys, I must allow your bad manners to pass unpunished, Merry!" he added.

Tom Merry coloured. But he made no reply.

He would not willingly have hurt even James Silverson's feelings. But it was not his fault if James moved about as quietly as a cat, and heard and saw things that he was not intended to see or hear.

Mr. Silverson took out a little notebook and made notes of the names of the Fourth Form boys present—D'Arcy, Blake, Herries, Digby, Cardew, Clive, Levison, and Trimble. Then he walked away.

"Bai Jove!" murmured Arthur Augustus. "Extwa school on Wednesday—and he knows vewy well that it's the House match on Wednesday!"

"He can't do it!" said Blake. "Thank goodness he will be gone on Wednesday! If he passes this on to Lathom, catch Lathom detaining a fellow from a House match! Not likely!"

"It's the Worm's last wriggle," said Manners, "unless—"

"Unless what?" asked Tom.
 "Unless he's got some dodge up his sleeve for sticking on here," said Manners. "But I don't see how."
 "Can't be done!" said Blake. "Nothing for him to do here when Lathom comes back; and we've got it in the Head's fist that Lathom's coming back on Wednesday. We're all right!"
 "Wight as wain!" said Arthur Augustus.
 And Manners of the Shell nodded assent. There was no doubt that Silverson would stick on if he could, and that it was a blow to him to leave. But he had to leave on Wednesday, and it was all right.

A DUCKING FOR TWO!

"THAT worm!" said George Figgins.
 "That tick!" muttered Kerr.
 "Blow him!" granted Fatty Wynn.
 Figgins & Co. of the New House at St. Jim's were out of gates after class. That would not have mattered if they had not also been out of bounds.
 Out of bounds, they did not want to catch their Form-master's eyes, especially the cold, glinting, greenish eyes of their temporary Form-master, Mr. James Silverson.
 They were not very far out of bounds—in fact, no more than a dozen yards at the moment, though they had been going farther.
 But a dozen inches would have been enough for the Worm!

On half-holidays school bounds were considerably extended. But it was not a holiday; and on other days bounds stretched only as far as the little stream that flowed through Wayland Wood on its way to join the Rhyl.

That stream was crossed by a plank bridge.
 Figgins & Co. had crossed the plank bridge, and they were, therefore, out of bounds when, looking back, they spotted a hard, familiar face on the woodland path behind them on the other side of the stream.
 It was only a glimpse among the underwood through which the footpath wound, but it was enough.

"Cover!" said Figgins. "If he spots us it means lines!"
 "Or a whopping!" said Fatty Wynn. "Silverson likes whopping a fellow! Frightful tick!"
 The three backed into cover beside the path. Foliage was thinning in the autumn; but there was pretty good cover, and the New House Fourth Formers lost no time in backing into it.

Once safely out of sight, they looked back along the footpath, waiting for Mr. Silverson to pass. It was just ill-luck that he happened to be taking a walk in the same direction after class that day.
 "Hallo! He's not alone!" muttered Figgins.

"Lathom!" said Kerr.
 Mr. Silverson, coming on towards the stream the New House juniors had crossed, had appeared in sight first, being taller than his companion. But as he came nearer the juniors discerned that he was not alone. Little Mr. Lathom was walking with him.

They came out of the winding woodland path towards the stream, and both came into full view.
 Kerr gave Mr. Silverson a very curious look.
 "It's rather weird!" he remarked. "What the dickens has Silverson chummed up with our old beak for? He isn't the man to sympathise with an elderly gent who's been laid up."

"No fear!" granted Fatty Wynn.
 "It's odd!" said Kerr. "Ever since Lathom has been about again Silverson has been jelly attentive to him. They often go for walks. Silverson's half Lathom's age and twice as active; it can't be much pleasure for him to walk with a toddling old gentleman like Lathom. He can't enjoy it, but he does it, and he's not a man to do kind actions."

"Not he!" said Figgins.
 "And he's got Lathom's place, too," said Kerr. "He can't be fearfully keen on Lathom getting fit again and pushing him out of it. Lathom's about the last beak at St. Jim's that you'd expect him to like in the circumstances. But he sticks to him and toddles him about."
 "Might have a spot of kindness in him somewhere," said Figgins.

"He doesn't look it."
 "No, he doesn't. Still, there it is."

GOOD NEWS FOR YOU, CHUMS!

**GRAND NEW
 ADVENTURE SERIAL
 STARTING NEXT WEEK!**

Turn to page 23 for further details.

The two masters came on slowly and reached the plank bridge across the stream. There little Mr. Lathom came to a halt, and peered up at his taller companion through his spectacles.

The juniors heard the murmur of his voice as he spoke, though they did not catch the words. But they could guess that the old master of the Fourth had walked far enough, and was thinking of turning back.

James' voice, sharper and louder, came to their ears.
 "A few minutes farther, Mr. Lathom, and we can take the other path, and return to the school by Rylcombe Lane."

Mr. Silverson stepped on the plank bridge to lead the way, and Mr. Lathom followed him.
 "Pray step carefully, Mr. Lathom!" said James, over his shoulder. "The plank is wet and a little slippery."

If that was not a kind thought Figgins & Co. did not know what it was. James seemed very careful about his companion.

The plank certainly was wet and slippery. That woodland stream, a mere trickle in the summer days, had been swollen by the rains of autumn, and now filled its channel to brimming banks. Water had washed over the plank again and again. There was at least five feet of water under the plank, and it would have been rather a serious matter for Mr. Lathom to tip in.

The old master of the Fourth trod very carefully and gingerly behind James Silverson. There was no risk if one walked carefully. But a careless step would have meant a slip and a ducking.

Figgins & Co. watched and waited. Once across the stream, the two masters would walk on, past the New House juniors' cover, and would be gone.

Three fellows who were out of bounds were rather anxious for them to go.

But they were not across the stream yet.

"Oh!" came a sudden exclamation from Mr. Silverson.

He slipped.

He had warned Mr. Lathom that the plank was slippery, and Mr. Lathom had not slipped. But James did.

"Oh crumbs!" gasped Figgins. "Look! He's over!"

James spun over on the plank. He spun backwards, and his arm, flung out wildly, crashed against the man who was following him.

There was a sharp squeak from Mr. Lathom.

He tipped sideways, staggering off the plank.

Two splashes sounded like one as both the masters went in.

"Oh crumbs! Come on!" panted Figgins.

The New House trio forgot all about cover. They tore out of the thicket towards the stream.

Silverson, no doubt, could look after himself. But it was very doubtful whether Mr. Lathom could.

The swollen stream rushed hard between its brimming banks. Mr. Lathom would only have been half a head above the surface if he had stood upright. But he did not stand upright. He swept helplessly over in the fast current.

But in a few seconds Silverson's grasp was on him. The new master, swimming strongly, supported him in the water.

"Hold on to me!" The juniors, as they ran, heard his voice. "Hold on!"

Little Mr. Lathom clutched blindly at his rescuer. James held him in one arm, and with the other grabbed at a bush on the bank.

The next moment Figgins & Co. were on the spot.

"Let us help, sir!" panted Figgins.

James Silverson stared at them. Even at that moment, up to his neck in water, with a half-conscious man clinging to him, his face set with anger at the unexpected sight of the New House juniors.

But he did not speak.

Silverson could have scrambled out of the rushing stream, dragging Mr. Lathom after him. But the juniors made his task easier. Figgins, Kerr, and Wynn all got hold of Mr. Lathom and drew him from the water. Silverson clambered out after him.

He stood, dripping with water. Little Mr. Lathom lay streaming, dazed and dizzy.

"What are you boys doing here?" snapped Mr. Silverson harshly. "You are out of bounds on this side of the stream!"

Figgins & Co. looked at him. It was the fact; but they wondered how even the Worm could think of it, with Mr. Lathom lying at his feet in such a state.

But James recollected himself the next moment.

"Run to the school as fast as you can!" he said sharply. "Tell the House dame what has happened, and ask her to have hot-water bottles ready. And request Mr. Railton to telephone for the doctor. This may be a serious matter for Mr. Lathom. Lose no time! Hurry! I shall get Mr. Lathom to the school! Hurry on ahead!"

"Yes, sir!" gasped Figgins.

And the three juniors cut across the plank and started for St. Jim's at top speed.

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DARK SUSPICIONS!

"YOU fellows heard?" gasped Baggy Trimble.

Baggy put an excited head into the changing-room. A good many fellows were there, after a spot of football practice following class.

"Well, what's the latest?" asked Monty Lowther.

"Lathom!" gasped Baggy.

"Lathom!" repeated Jack Blake. "What about Lathom?"

"Drowned—"

"What?" yelled every fellow in the changing-room.

"I mean, nearly drowned," amended Baggy.

"Silverson saved his life!"

"Silverson?" exclaimed Tom Merry.

"Yes, the Worm!" said Baggy. "Saved old Lathom's life after he was drowned—I mean, nearly drowned!"

Baggy was bursting with the news. Probably he expected to make the men in the changing-room jump.

He made one fellow jump. That was Jack Blake. Blake jumped across to Baggy and kicked him. As Blake had not yet taken off his football boots, there was a loud thud, and a fearful roar from Baggy Trimble.

"Yoop! Wow! Why, you rotter, I thought you'd like to hear that Lathom had been drowned—I mean, nearly drowned—I mean, that Silverson had shaved his wife—I mean, saved his life! Yaroop!"

"Now, has anything happened?" demanded Blake.

"Wow! Find out! Yow-ow!"

And Baggy Trimble, deeply incensed by that reception of his startling news, departed from the changing-room.

"Gammon, of course!" said Manners. "Catch Silverson saving anybody's life—even if Lathom tumbled in anywhere, which, of course, he didn't."

"I think they went out together," remarked Talbot of the Shell.

"They're always together, since Lathom has been on his pins again," said Levison of the Fourth. "Silverson seems to like his company."

"Better find out if anything's happened," grunted Blake. "Awful if anything did stop Lathom coming back to his Form on Wednesday."

"Bai Jove! That would be feahful!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus.

"Rotten!" agreed Tom Merry.

Most of the juniors finished changing in a hurry, to get out and inquire what had happened—if anything had.

They soon found out that something had.

From Taggles, the porter, they learned that Mr. Lathom had been brought in in a cart from Rylcombe with Mr. Silverson, both of them drenched to the skin. A woodman's cart had been the only lift that Mr. Silverson had been able to obtain for the old master of the Fourth.

Evidently both of them had been in the water somewhere.

"But how did it happen, Taggles?" asked Tom Merry.

"Mr. Silverson said that Mr. Lathom fell into Rylcombe Water, and he pulled him out," answered Taggles.

Rylcombe Water was the name of the woodland stream in Wayland Wood.

"Oh!" exclaimed Tom. "The plank bridge, perhaps—"

"That was it, sir!" said Taggles. "Mr. Lathom fell off the bridge, from what Mr. Silverson said."

"And Silverson got him out?" asked Manners. "Yes, sir, and brought him back in a cart—couldn't get anything else. Poor Mr. Lathom looked in a bad way," said Taggles, shaking his head. "After being ill and all—it won't do him no good."

"Where is he now?" asked Lowther.

"They've took him to the sanatorium, sir, and the doctor's there," said Taggles. "Some Noo House boys was there, and they saw it, and brought in the noos."

"Where's Silverson?"

"Gone to the 'Ouse," said Taggles. "He was wet through; but it won't hurt him much—a young man like 'im. But old Mr. Lathom—"

Taggles shook his head again solemnly. "Bai Jove! This is feahfully wuff on poor old Lathom!" said Arthur Augustus. "He is wathah a venvewable old sportsman to tumble about in a stweam, you know. He will vevy likely catch a feahful cold."

"Let's hope it's no worse than that," grunted Blake.

Levison gave a whistle.

"By gum! If this means that old Lathom has a relapse, it means the Worm striking on here," he remarked.

"It does," said Manners, very quietly.

"Nevah mind that, Mannahs," said Arthur Augustus. "It's poor old Lathom that mattahs."

"Poor old us, if that rat, Silverson, hangs on!" grunted Herries.

"Weally, Hewwies—"

"Who were the New House chaps who saw it, Taggles? Do you know?" asked Manners.

"Master Figgins, sir, and Kerr and Wynn."

Manners made a sign to his two chums, and they left the group at the porter's lodge.

Tom and Monty glanced curiously at Manners' face. It was set and grim.

"What on earth have you got in your head now, Manners?" asked Tom Merry, with a vague uneasiness.

"That cur—" muttered Manners.

"Silverson?"

"Yes; that plotting rat—"

"He seems to have played up pretty decently, getting old Lathom out of the water, and getting him back to the school."

"After tipping him in!" breathed Manners.

Tom Merry and Monty Lowther jumped simultaneously, almost clear of the quad.

"What?" they gasped together.

"Blind as owls?" snapped Manners. "Didn't I tell you the Worm would stick on here if he could? Think he wants to go before he's carried out his rotten scheming? Hasn't he barged in at St. Jim's especially to dish you, Tom? Isn't it his game to cut you out with old Miss Fawcett, and hasn't he tried every rotten trick he could think of, and fozzled every one of them? Think he was going with the job he came here for unfinished?"

"Manners!" gasped Tom.

"My dear chap!" exclaimed Lowther.

"I jolly well knew he had a card up his sleeve!" said Manners, with conviction. "I knew he never meant to go if he could crawl out of it. I jolly well knew it. But I never thought of this."

"Don't doubt of it now, for goodness' sake!"

exclaimed Tom. "It's impossible—impossible! The man's a brute; but even Silverson—"

"Ass!"

"It's too thick," said Lowther.

"Chump!"

"Well, Figgins & Co. seem to know what's happened," said Tom. "We can get it from them."

"That's what we're going to do," said Manners, "and you'll jolly well see, when they tell you. Silverson's wangled this."

"For the love of Mike, not a word of that for anybody to hear!" exclaimed Tom, in alarm. "Do you want to be taken up to the Head and bunked? The Head would bunk a man like a shot for saying such a thing about a beak."

Manners laughed scornfully.

"Think I'm a fool?" he snapped. "I'm saying nothing, except to you two. Let's hear what Figgins has got to say. You'll see."

The Terrible Three found Figgins & Co. at tea in their study in the New House. The trio were all looking grave. Even Fatty seemed a little less concentrated on the tuck than usual.

"Heard?" asked Figgins.

"Yes; and we've heard that you were there," said Tom. "How did it happen?"

"That clumsy ass, Silverson—" said Figgins.

"Clumsy?" asked Manners.

"Well, a dozen people cross that plank over Rycombe Water every day without slipping off," said Figgins. "Silverson slipped."

"It was not Lathom who slipped?" asked Manners.

"Oh, no! You see, he was after Silverson, and Silverson slipped, knocked against him, and he tumbled in, and Silverson after him," explained Figgins.

"Silverson got him in the water, and got him to the bank," said Kerr. "We cut on ahead—Silverson sent us—to get things ready for Lathom when he was brought in."

"We helped get him out," said Fatty Wynn. "But Silverson really saved him. An old bean like Lathom might have been swept away. He's no swimmer."

"Yes, Silverson saved him," agreed Figgins. "But if he hadn't been a clumsy ass, old Lathom would never have gone in at all."

Tom Merry & Co. left the New House with clouded faces. Neither Tom nor Monty could quite believe that Manners had it right—that even a worm like Silverson would have played such a trick. But they could not help admitting that Figgins & Co.'s description of the occurrence bore out Manners' view. It was Silverson who had slipped on the plank and caused the catastrophe.

"Well, what now?" grunted Manners, as they left the New House.

"Well, Silverson fell in, too," said Tom slowly.

"He had to keep up appearances, I suppose. Think he wanted the Head to know that he tipped Lathom in to stick to his job?" asked Manners sarcastically.

"He got him out," said Lowther.

"He didn't want to drown him," said Manners in the same sarcastic tone. "Even the Worm's got his limit."

"But—" murmured Tom uneasily.

"Lots of fellows have been puzzled by the Worm chumming with old Lathom and giving him such a lot of friendly attention," jeered Manners. "We know the reason now; he had

this cut and dried, in case it was necessary to lengthen his stay here."

"Oh!" said Tom.

"If he'd got away with his scheme for fixing you up as a pub-haunter, and getting you sacked, he would have been through here—and nothing would have happened to Lathom," said Manners. "He fooled it, as he fools everything: he's as big a fool as rogue—like most rogues! This gives him a new lease."

"Not unless Lathom is laid up again," said Tom.

Grunt—from Manners.

"Think a man of Lathom's age, just over an illness, can go head over heels into Rylcombe Water without getting laid up?" he snapped. "Lathom will be ill for weeks after this. And so long as Lathom's ill a temporary master will have to take his place—and that's James Silverson."

"I hope not!" said Tom.

"Fat lot of good hoping! Silverson's not going—you'll see!" said Manners. "He's fixed this up to stay—and he's not going."

Whether Manners was right, or whether Manners was wrong, one thing, at least, was soon known for certain. Mr. Lathom had caught a severe cold—and the date of Mr. Silverson's departure was indefinitely postponed. Whether James Silverson had wangled it or not, James Silverson was remaining a fixture at St. Jim's.

THE WHIP-HAND!

"CERTAINLY not!" said Mr. Silverson. Tom Merry drew a deep breath.

It was Tuesday—the day before the House match.

On Wednesday School House juniors were facing New House juniors in the first House match of the season.

And on Wednesday nearly half the junior House team was booked for extra school.

Had James Silverson departed that Wednesday, as arranged and expected, all would have been well. Mr. Lathom, the kindly old master of the Fourth, certainly would not have detained men wanted in a House match, unless for a very serious cause indeed. But James had not departed.

The Fourth Formers realised that their happy rejoicing had been premature. James was still with them.

And as James was still with them, it depended on James whether that sentence was rescinded. James Silverson, master of the Fourth, had the right and the power to send any member of that Form into "extra" if it seemed good to him so to do.

That was why Tom Merry was in Mr. Silverson's study after class on Tuesday.

Tom was not by any means a suspicious fellow. He found it hard to believe that Silverson was acting merely from personal dislike and malice.

He knew—he could not help knowing—that James had designs on old Miss Priscilla's money-bags and regarded him as a rival in that direction.

He knew—or, at all events, he had no doubt—that James had tried by stealthy means to blacken him and bring about his expulsion from the school—which, no doubt, would have dished him with old Miss Fawcett.

James had failed, and he could hardly try the same game twice. Whether he stayed or whether

he went, Tom did not see what he could do further.

Certainly he did not see how James could hope to further any such scheme by making himself obnoxious in football matters.

Disliking and distrusting the man as he did, it was not easy for Tom to call on him in his study and ask what amounted to a favour.

But his position as junior football captain left him no choice.

The House match was due on the morrow. He had to have his men to play Figgins & Co. And, with his usual cheery optimism, he took it almost for granted that when the matter was explained to Mr. Silverson he would wash out that "extra" school for the fellows who were wanted in the game.

It was simple enough. Even admitting that that sentence of extra was deserved, there was no special reason for putting the culprits in extra on Wednesday. Saturday would serve the purpose equally well.

James, no doubt, was deeply incensed by the rejoicing over the Head's notice on Monday. But he was morally bound to stretch a point in consideration of the House match.

James listened to Tom's request with a sickly smile, and he answered:

"Certainly not!"

Tom stood silent for a few moments. James picked up a pen as a hint that it was time for him to go.

But Tom Merry did not go. This matter had to be settled first.

"Will you let me explain, sir?" he asked quietly. "As you are new here you may not know—"

"I decline to discuss the matter," said Mr. Silverson. "I can only say that I am surprised—amazed—by the impudence of your request. Certain boys of my Form are given detentions for unexampled insolence. You have the audacity—I may say the effrontery—to ask me to disregard matters of discipline on account of your football arrangements! I shall certainly do nothing of the kind."

"House matches are not trifling matters, sir," said Tom.

"Indeed!" said Mr. Silverson.

"If it were a School match I could fill up the team with New House men. But a House match—"

"I am afraid that I must mention that my time is of value, Merry," said Mr. Silverson, with a glance at the clock.

"If you would put those fellows in extra on Saturday—"

"Am I to understand, Merry, that you, a junior in the Shell, are undertaking to instruct me how to manage my Form?" asked Mr. Silverson.

"No, Mr. Silverson," said Tom, keeping his temper with difficulty; "I am asking you to do what Mr. Lathom certainly would have done—"

"That, whether correct or not, is quite immaterial," said James Silverson. "I shall not change my decision—especially at the request of a boy who has been insolent to me on every possible occasion since I have been in this school. You may leave my study."

"This will mean losing the House match!" said Tom.

"Dear me!" said Mr. Silverson ironically.

"You don't care about that, of course!" exclaimed Tom, his eyes flashing. "Every other

master at St. Jim's takes some interest in games. But it's nothing to you if the House is beaten."

James Silverson's eyes glittered. "Are you aware that you are addressing a master, Merry?" he asked. "I warn you to curb your insolence."

"I shall go to the Housemaster, then!" exclaimed Tom, his temper breaking out. "Mr. Railton will not allow the games to be knocked to pieces because of your grudges against me, Mr. Silverson."

The moment Tom had uttered those words he realised that they were exactly the kind of words that James wanted him to utter—and had been trying to provoke him into uttering.

James rose to his feet.

"That is enough, Merry!" he said venomously. "I shall report your insolence to your Form-master. Mr. Linton will deal with you. Now leave my study."

Tom choked back angry words and left the study. He realised that he had said a good deal too much already—considering that James, whatever else he was, was a master in the school.

With a flush in his cheeks, the captain of the Shell tramped away to the junior day-room, where anxious footballers were awaiting the outcome of his embassy to Silverson's study.

His look as he came into the day-room did not encourage them to believe that he had been successful.

"Nothing doing?" asked Blake.

"Nothing!" answered Tom, between his teeth. "That cur has the whip-hand, and he's using it! I've got to find new men for the game to-morrow—only a day before the match!"

"But you can't leave me out, Tom Mewwy!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus D'Arcy in dismay. "That means chuckin' away the game."

"It doesn't matter so much about leaving me out, I suppose!" snorted Blake.

"Wathah not!" agreed Arthur Augustus innocently. "You can be replaced at a pinch, dear boy. But Tom Mewwy cannot face Figgins & Co. without his best forward."

"Idiot!"

"Weally, Blake—"

"Does it matter about me?" snorted Herries. "Who's going to keep goal if I have to stand out?"

"But what the thump is Silverson doing it for?" asked Ernest Levison. "No other beak ever mucks up matches like this. It's an unwritten law."

"He's doing it because I'm football captain," answered Tom. "He doesn't care a bean whether you men go into 'extra' or not."

"Um!" said Levison dubiously. "I know your jolly old relation doesn't like you very much, but—that's rather steep."

"Steep or not, that's how it stands, and I told him so!" answered Tom.

"You told Silverson that?" yelled Levison.

"Yes, I did!"

"Well, my hat! Didn't he skin you?"

Tom set his teeth.

"I'd like to see the cur lay hands on me!" he retorted. "He's not my beak, thank goodness! He's going whining to Linton about it, he told me."

"Well, you can't talk to beaks like that!" said Blake testily. "If there was a chance, you've knocked it on the head now."

"Yaas, wathah! It was vewy wash to make such a remark to a beak, Tom Mewwy," said

Arthur Augustus, shaking his noble head seriously.

"There was no chance!" said Tom. "Silverson had made up his mind about that. I believe, now I think of it, that he wanted to make me lose my temper. It gives the cad a chance at me. Anyhow, that's that—we've got to face Figgins & Co. with a team all at sixes and sevens—unless Railton takes a hand—"

"Railton can't interfere," said Blake. "He never interferes between a beak and his Form. A beak can give detention if he chooses."

Tom Merry nodded. It was likely that Mr. Railton, if he knew, might disapprove—but he would not intervene. In matters connected with a Form, a Form-master's word was law. Silverson was within his rights—or, at all events, within his powers.

"The cur!" muttered Tom. "The cur—"

"Go easy!" whispered Blake. "Here's a Knox."

Knox of the Sixth looked in.

"Merry here?" he asked.

"Here!" answered Tom.

"You're wanted in Linton's study."

Evidently, James had lost no time in reporting to the master of the Shell. And Tom, with set lips, made his way to Mr. Linton's study.

NO USE FOR WISDOM!

MANNERS and Lowther stared.

They were getting tea in Study No. 10 in the Shell, ready for Tom Merry when he came up. The kettle was singing in the study grate—and there was a fragrant scent of toast and sosses.

But when Tom Merry tramped into the study, Manners and Lowther forgot all about tea, toast, and sosses, and stared blankly at their chum.

Tom's face was white, and his eyes were burning. Seldom, or never, had his chums seen him so savagely angry. He kicked the door shut with a bang.

Then he threw himself into a chair, but immediately rose again with a gasp. His chums guessed the reason of that.

"Whopped!" asked Lowther.

Tom nodded without speaking. His feelings seemed too deep for speech at the moment.

"But you were going to see Silverson," said Manners. "Silverson can't whop a Shell man."

"Six from Linton!" said Tom, between his teeth. "Six—and a jaw!"

"What's got Linton's rag out, then?"

"That cur—" Tom choked. "That rat—that tick—"

"But how—why—what—" exclaimed Lowther. "What the thump has Linton given you six for?"

"Cheeking Silverson."

"Did you cheek him?"

"Yes."

"Oh!"

Tom Merry moved about the study. He did not feel disposed to sit down at present. When Linton gave a fellow six that fellow generally had reason to remember the whole half-dozen for some time afterwards.

"You're rather a goat, old man!" said Manners quietly. "I suppose Silverson drew you—"

"Yes!"

"You shouldn't have been drawn."

"I know that—but I was!"

"He's a deep rotter!" said Manners. "If he can get you in the wrong, that's what he wants. I suppose you got shirty when he wouldn't let those Fourth Form men off for Soccer to-morrow—"

"Yes!"

"Walking into it!" grunted Manners. "He's got his teeth into them simply to give you a knock as football captain."

"That's what I told him."

Monty Lowther whistled.

"Well, if you told him that, and he put it to Linton, I don't see what our old bean could do!" he said. "He can't let a Shell man cheek other beaks."

"I know that. I'm not blaming Linton. He was ratty," said Tom. "He hates complaints about his Form—Silverson knows that. And the rat had a good case—a matter of discipline in his Form, nothing to do with the Shell—and a Shell man telling him it was all through a private grudge—"

Manners whistled in his turn.

"You shouldn't have said that to Silverson, Tom," he said.

"It was true."

"I know that, ass! But you can't talk to beaks like that. Nice state of affairs if we all told the beaks what we thought of them. Old Selby's a tartar—think the Third Form ever tell him so?"

"I was a fool to go and speak to the man at all!" said Tom. "I've got to be careful to steer clear of him so long as he stays here. But what's a fellow to do? Are we going to lose House matches because that cur happens to want to score over me?"

"You'll have to fill the places, somehow."

"We haven't a man to keep goal like old Herries. We want D'Arcy in the front line. And Levison's a good man. And Cardew, too—though we can do without him. I've got to make up the team over again, anyhow. You'll have to go in, Manners."

Manners grinned—a rather sardonic grin.

"Thanks no end!" he said dryly.

"Oh, don't be an ass!" said Tom. His temper was not so equable as usual. "Do you want me to say you're as good as Blake because you're a pal of mine?"

"I'll try to play some sort of a game—though not, of course, in the same street with anybody from Study No. 6!" said Manners, with dry sarcasm.

"Chuck it, old chap!" said Monty Lowther.

"Are we going to let Silverson start us ragging one another in this study?"

"By gum! He'd like that," said Manners.

"All serene, Tommy—let's have tea. I'll play no end of a game to-morrow."

Tom Merry laughed.

"Stick to that, old chap!" he said. "We're going to beat the New House if we can, Silverson or no Silverson. Let's have tea."

Over tea Tom Merry took out pencil and paper on a corner of the table, to reconstruct the junior House team. He wrinkled his brows over that task.

House matches were very keenly contested at St. Jim's. And this was the first junior House match of the season. There were good men on both sides—but the best men were wanted. At the best, the School House had no junior goalkeeper who was in the same street

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with Fatty Wynn of the New House; and New House men like Figgins, Kerr, and Redfern were hard to beat.

Of the School House men who were booked for "extra," Blake and D'Arcy and Herries and Levison were badly wanted in the team. Those four places had to be refilled—and Digby, Clive, and Cardew were not available for filling them, being booked for "extra" with the others.

It was rather a silent tea in Study No. 10 in the Shell.

Tom gave more attention to his football problem than to tea. Manners was thinking hard, though not about Soccer.

It seemed to Manners that the Worm, having been defeated in his earlier schemes, was now trying a new game.

The Terrible Three knew—though proof was another matter—that the Worm had tried to land Tom Merry with a charge of pub-haunting in the style of Aubrey Racke. He had failed dismally.

Had he succeeded, Manners was assured that nothing would have happened to Mr. Lathom at Rylcombe Water. It was clear, to Manners, at least, that the plotter had contrived to get a new lease of life, so to speak, at St. Jim's—obviously for the purpose of carrying on his campaign.

This looked to Manners like the first move in his new game. To make Tom Merry out to be a bad character was no easy task. But to draw him into trouble with constituted authority—that was easier. If this was the first move, Tom had fallen blindly into the trap.

He had spoken to a master as no fellow could be permitted to speak to a master; he had been landed in trouble with his own Form-master as a consequence. It seemed to Manners that he could see a scheme behind this as in a glass darkly.

Monty Lowther was also thoughtful—on still another subject. There was a glimmer in Monty's eyes that hinted of japing.

"Look here!" said Lowther, at length.

"I suppose I can shove in Wildrake," said Tom Merry, "and some more Shell men—"

"Suppose—" said Monty.

"Gore can play back," went on Tom. "He's not good, but he can play."

"Suppose—"

"Eh? Suppose what? You're in, anyhow, fathead!"

"Suppose that rat Silverson got called away somehow to-morrow afternoon," said Monty Lowther.

"Eh? What difference would that make?"

"While the cat's away, the mice will play!" answered Lowther. "In this case, while the cat was away, the mice would play football!"

"Oh!" exclaimed Tom. He stared across the table at Monty. "I dare say they'd risk it—in fact, I know they would; but do you fancy that that rat is going to walk off the scene just to give them a chance to cut detention?"

"I think he might be made to," said Monty.

"How, fathead?"

"That wants thinking out, of course. But suppose something happened to call Silverson off; he couldn't take Fourth Form men in 'extra.' He would have to hand them over to a detention master—Mossoo, most likely! They could cut, and play Soccer. It would mean a row afterwards—but it would be worth it."

Tom Merry looked very thoughtful.

In the ordinary way, he certainly never would



"You're not to ring me here at the school, you blockhead!" exclaimed Mr. Silverson. **He little knew that it was Monty Lowther, and not Mulligan, who was phoning him!**

have dreamed of such a device. A fellow like Cardew of the Fourth found it amusing to "dish" beaks, but Tom was a steady and sensible fellow, and found nothing whatever amusing in anything of the kind.

But in this case, he was up against a man who was an interloper in the school, who would have been gone but for foul play, and who was his enemy. That altered the case very much.

"If it could be worked——" he said at last.

"Wash that right out!" said Manners at once.

"Rats!" said Lowther warmly.

"Why, you ass?" demanded Tom.

"Because that's the very thing that Silverson would like you to do!" said Manners quietly. "He's got you landed with Linton already. That would land you with the Housemaster—perhaps with the Head. You'd get the responsibility—as football captain—for playing men who cut detention."

"I don't care a bean about that!" answered Tom. "I'll take all the responsibility if I can get my men, by hook or by crook, to play the New House to-morrow afternoon."

"You'd be playing right into his hands."

"Oh, blow him! Let's think this out, Monty!"

"You're a fool, Tom!" said Manners.

"I'm a football captain!" answered Tom. "My

business is to win matches for the House—not to let a plotting rat dish us in Soccer. I'd stand a Head's flogging, if it came to that, rather than let him get away with it."

Manners shrugged his shoulders.

Between Tom, keen on Soccer, and Monty, keen on a jape, it was evidently useless for Harry Manners to utter words of wisdom in Study No. 10 just then. He left the study after tea with a worried brow—leaving Tom Merry and Monty Lowther deep in discussion of ways and means.

CALLED AWAY!

JAMES SILVERSON smiled. After dinner the following day, James was in his study, sitting at the window, looking out into the autumn sunshine in the quadrangle.

James was feeling good.

That morning, Mr. Lathom had been taken away to a nursing-home on the South Coast. He was likely to be away for weeks.

Whether there was anything on James' conscience or not, things were going his way; his temporary post at St. Jim's had become a fixture, for a good part of the term at least.

James had now plenty of time to work in. And one or two failures did not discourage him. He was Tom Merry's rival for a fortune—and he did not believe, or even think of believing, that Tom had never given a thought to that fortune, or cared a bean about it. James judged others by himself.

Mr. Silverson found it hard, very hard, to keep patient and kind and attentive when he was dealing with old Miss Priscilla. He had no doubt that Tom Merry found it equally hard, and he could only marvel at such powers of humbugging in a boy of fifteen. Tom, in fact, did it better than he did—that was how James looked at it!

That Tom's motive was genuine affection for his old guardian and gratitude for acts of kindness, never occurred to James Silverson. He did not believe in gratitude or affection—never having experienced either.

James was, in fact, a curious mixture of sharpness and obtuseness. Judging others by himself, he found the world a rather rascally place. And so his judgments were oftener wrong than right.

At the moment, his eyes were fixed on Tom Merry and Manners in the quad. Monty Lowther was not with his chums. Not that James gave any thought to Monty—he was not interested in him.

Tom and Manners seemed to be engaged in an argument.

James could not hear a word—but he could watch the expressions on the two boyish faces. And he calculated that Manners—a sedate and thoughtful fellow, as he had observed—was trying to prevail upon his less reflective chum to take heed in the matter under discussion.

James wondered what that matter was. More likely than not, Tom was thinking of some act of retaliation, and Manners was trying to point out to him the unwisdom of such a course. In which case, James charitably hoped that Manners would be successful.

His cheerful reflections were interrupted by the buzz of the telephone-bell.

He turned from the window and picked up the receiver.

"Hallo!"

"That you, Silverson?" came a husky voice over the wires.

James gave a start.

He did not know the voice, but it did not sound a nice voice. James had all sorts of acquaintances, who would have surprised Dr. Holmes very much could the Head ever have seen them. A man could not back his fancy at the races without having acquaintances of whom a headmaster certainly would not have approved.

But James was very careful to keep such acquaintances at a safe distance from St. Jim's. If one of them had rung him up at the school it was very irritating to James. A man in his peculiar position could not be too careful.

"Who is speaking?" he rapped.

"Don't you know my toot?" came the husky voice.

"Give me your name at once."

"Oh, come off, Silverson! You know Jimmy Mulligan's voice all right!" came a husky grunt.

"What yer giving me?"

James Silverson's face set in black rage.

He knew Jimmy Mulligan, at the Black Bull in Wayland, only too well. That husky grunt might have been Mulligan's, or any other boozy blackguard's. Why the man had rung him

up, James had no idea—it was against his strict instructions. Such communications were altogether too risky on a school telephone.

"You fool!" he breathed. "Ring off at once! Do you hear? I shall see you at the usual time and place—now ring off!"

He jammed back the receiver savagely.

"The fool!" he breathed. "The fool! They may overhear at the exchange—anyone might step into my study—the fool!"

Burr—burr!

It was the telephone again!

James fairly bounded to the receiver. His face was rather like that of a demon in a pantomime as he jammed it to his ear.

"Is that you again?" he breathed.

"We got cut orf!" came the husky voice.

"You fool! You dolt! Ring off at once!" It was useless for James to jam back the receiver if Mulligan was going to ring up again. "You're not to ring me here, you blockhead—don't you understand that?"

"That ain't the way to talk to a bloke, Silverson! I'll ring orf when I've said my say—not afore! You can bite on that."

James gritted his teeth.

"Wait a moment!" he breathed.

He crossed quickly to the study door and locked it. Then he came back to the telephone.

If Mulligan insisted on speaking, James could not stop him. He wanted to cut it as short as possible.

"Now what is it?" he breathed. "Quick!"

"I got to see you this artemoon—"

"That is impossible."

"Sez you!" came the husky grunt. "You better think agin, Silverson! I done enough for you. Didn't I come to the school last week and make out I knowed Tom Merry, and didn't that 'Ousemaster lay into me with a stick—"

"Silence! Silence!"

"I 'ad to go through it! It was all a fizzle, and no fault of mine! I came to the school, like we fixed it up—"

"Silence! What is it you want to say to me? Cut it short!"

"I got to 'op it!" said the husky voice. "Never mind why. I got to 'op it, and 'op it quick! You got to 'elp."

James Silverson gritted his teeth again.

It was not surprising if a man like Mulligan had landed in some trouble, and had to change his address suddenly. He was the sort of man to whom such a thing might often happen. But Mr. Silverson wanted to have nothing to do with it. Unfortunately, it was easier to make bad acquaintances than to drop them when done with.

"I paid you!" he breathed between his teeth.

"That ain't neither 'ere nor there! I got to 'op it! You got to stand me a railway fare, and something over! Seeing what I done for you, that ain't much to ask. You come over to Abbotsford Station—"

"I cannot!"

"Sez you! I'm ketching the three o'clock at Abbotsford for London. I'm going to be there at three! If you ain't there, I'll call for you at the school, like I did for Tom Merry t'other day! 'Ow'd you like that?"

James Silverson trembled.

"I—I will be at Abbotsford at three!" he stammered. "I—I think I can manage it. I will see you there."

"I'll wait for you!" said the husky voice. "But if I lose that there train, Silverson, you'll wish I'd caught it, and you can lay to that!"

"I shall be there!"

"O.K.!"

James Silverson put up the receiver and wiped a spot of perspiration from his brow.

A man playing James' peculiar game had to deal with such men as Mulligan. But it was rather like playing with edged tools!

He dared not refuse the racing man's demand. The bare thought of Mulligan butting in at St. Jim's, and claiming acquaintance, made him feel cold all over.

And he had little time to spare. It was a good distance to Abbotsford—more than twice as far as Wayland—and it was already turned two.

Mr. Silverson lost no time.

But, deeply exasperated as he was, he did not forget that certain members of his Form were due for "extra" that afternoon. There were eight fellows in the Fourth who had to turn up for detention at two-thirty—the same time as the kick-off in the junior House match. James was not likely to leave them at a loose end—and leave Tom Merry free to recapture his footballers.

He left his study and stepped into Monsieur Morny's. The French master had a detention class that afternoon.

A few minutes sufficed to arrange matters with Monsieur Morny. Then James hastily scribbled a notice to put on the board. And then, in hat and coat, he left the House and hurried down to the gates.

He passed Tom Merry and Manners—in too much haste to waste a glance on them. But they glanced at him.

"By gum!" said Tom, with a deep breath, as he watched Silverson hurry out at the gates. "By gum! See that, Manners?"

Grunt from Manners.

"Monty's got away with it all right!" said Tom.

"You're going to play those Fourth Form men?" asked Manners.

"What do you think?" said Tom, with a smile.

"I think you're an ass!"

Tom laughed.

"All right! You're off Soccer, old chap—you can take your camera for a walk! Have a good time!"

And Tom Merry hurried away to interview the Fourth Form men who were up for "extra."

O.K.!

"Y AAS, wathah!"

Arthur Augustus D'Aroy answered promptly and emphatically.

"Good man!" said Tom. "It will mean lines—perhaps a licking!"

"Who cares?" grinned Arthur Augustus.

"Sure the brute's gone out?" asked Blake.

"Just watched him go!" answered Tom.

"Well, that's all right—but how do you know he won't come in again?" asked Blake. "He's the kind of tick to walk down to Little Side and order us off, if he came in—and that won't win House matches."

"I think he's gone to Abbotsford," said Tom, with a smile. "He won't be back from there in a hurry."

"How do you know he's gone to Abbotsford?" asked Herries, with a stare. "I suppose he never told you where he was going?"

"No; somebody else did," answered Tom, laughing.

"Well, who?" asked Blake. "We want this clear!"

"It's all right," said Tom. "You fellows had better not know the details in case there's a row. But Silverson has been called away to Abbotsford—and it's certain that he's fallen for it, because I've just seen him scud off in a terrific hurry. He can't get back till the game's over!"

"Do you mean that you've fixed it somehow?" asked Blake, mystified.

"Sort of!" admitted Tom.

"Well, if you're sure—"

"Bank on it," said the captain of the Shell. "The only question is whether you men are ready to face the music for cutting 'extra,' now Silverson's gone and can't stop you."

"Jump at the chance!" said Blake.

Levison of the Fourth came out of the House. He hurried over to the group in the quad.

"You fellows heard?" he asked. "Silverson's called away, and we're handed over to Mossoo. We've got to go in for 'extra' French with old Morny, in his detention class."

"That shows he's not coming back in a hurry," said Tom. "He wouldn't have fixed that up—"

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"Well, look here," said Levison, "Mossoo's a different sort of man from the Worm—if we cut, he will only take our names. I'm ready to cut, if you want me for Soccer."

Tom Merry laughed.

"That's the big idea!" he said. "These fellows have agreed, and if you're game, too—"

"Game as pie!" said Levison promptly. "Count me in! And if you want Clive or Cardew, they'll come, too!"

"No—that's all right! Four men in a row will be enough," said Tom. "Mind, it may mean a whopping from Silverson—and he whops hard."

"Let him!" said Levison indifferently.

"Yaas, wathah!"

Tom glanced up at the clock tower. It was a quarter-past two.

"Time to get along to the changing-room," he said. "We're all right now, and Silverson can go to Abbotsford, or go to Jericho—"

"Has he gone to Abbotsford?" asked Levison.

"I believe so. Anyhow, he's gone!" said Tom, laughing. "Come on!"

It was quite a cheery crowd in the changing-room. Manners of the Shell, who was not wanted after all, went out with his camera—but he went in rather a worried mood. The other fellows were not worrying, however—least of all Monty Lowther, when he came in. Lowther arrived with a happy grin on his face.

"All right, Tom?" he asked.

"Right as rain!" answered Tom.

"You saw him clear?"

"I did!"

"Good egg!" said Lowther. "O.K.! Didn't I mention that it would be O.K.?"

Only Tom Merry in the changing-room knew that Monty Lowther had just come back from

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Rylcombe, and certainly no one thought of guessing that he had been using the post office telephone there—as little as Mr. Silverson guessed that the owner of that husky voice over the wires was a Shell fellow of St. Jim's.

It had worked like a charm!

The three knew, if no one else did, that James Silverson was hand-in-glove with the racing man, Mulligan, at the Black Bull in Wayland.

What Mulligan actually was doing that afternoon they, of course, did not know—but it was very improbable that he was at Abbotsford Railway Station—where James had gone expecting to see him!

James would not see Mulligan at Abbotsford. And, whether he waited for him or not, he would not be back at St. Jim's till the football match was over.

That was all that was wanted.

As for the consequences, they had to be taken when they came. Nobody at the moment was bothering about that.

Figgins of the New House regarded the School House team rather curiously on Little Side. The New House fellows knew all about Tom Merry's difficulty.

"So you're all here, after all?" asked Figgins.

"Yaas, wathah!" grinned Arthur Augustus.

"The whole happy family!" said Tom Merry, smiling.

"Jolly glad!" said Figgins cordially. "But how the dickens did it happen? Has Silverson let up on his giddy victims? It's not like him."

"Silverson hasn't let up," said Monty Lowther. "Silverson's let down!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And the junior footballers went into the field, merry and bright.

MANNERS' CAMERA CLICKS!

MANNERS of the Shell came to a sudden halt, and caught his breath.

He was stricken with dismay.

Harry Manners, not being wanted in Soccer, after all, had taken his camera for a walk, but not in his usual happy mood when he was wandering about with that beloved companion.

Manners was worried for his chum.

It seemed to him that Tom Merry, in taking the line that he had taken, was fairly playing into the hands of his enemy.

The Worm had been dished, so far as the football match was concerned. The House match was going to be played with the original eleven as mapped out by the junior captain of the School House. That was all right, so far as Soccer was concerned.

But Manners realised what his less thoughtful chums either could not, or would not, realise—that nothing could have suited the Worm better. It was playing his game for him.

No doubt he would be exasperated when he found that he had been tricked on the telephone. But when he came back to the school and found out what had happened—what then?

Four Fourth Formers would be up for a whopping for cutting "extra." That did not matter; the House match was worth a whopping. But Tom Merry, as captain, would be held responsible.

Tom would be taken to the Head.

What had he to say in his defence?

Knowing that four juniors were under detention, knowing that he was not entitled to play

them in football, knowing that his act was a deliberate defiance of authority, he had carried on regardless.

As likely as not it meant a flogging. Even then was not the worst. It meant a black mark against him.

It meant that his headmaster was going to look on Tom Merry as a reckless rebel—as a fellow who disregarded authority from the headmaster.

And that, Manners was convinced, was exactly what Silverson wanted.

Silverson would simply rejoice when he got back to the school and discovered what Tom had done. This was his new game, and Tom was making a move for him—a winning move.

With such reflections in his mind, Harry Manners was not enjoying his half-holiday as he walked, with a thoughtful and worried brow.

Manners was going over to Wayland with his camera, and he went by a short cut through the wood known to the St. Jim's juniors.

He came out into the footpath near the gate on the Wayland road.

It was then that he stopped in dismay.

Sitting on that gate, smoking a cigarette, was a red-faced man, with a very red nose, and a bowler hat tilted on one side of an oily head.

Manners knew Jimmy Mulligan at a glance.

He stopped, stepped back into the trees near the footpath, and looked at the disreputable racing man in utter dismay.

It was quite a natural thing for Mulligan, who lived at the Black Bull, not a quarter of a mile away, to take a walk along that road and take a rest on the gate to smoke a cigarette.

But it was one of those little circumstances that could not be foreseen when fellows plotted a plot.

Silverson had started for Abbotsford. To get to Abbotsford he had to take train from Wayland.

He would go—he was bound to go—by the footpath through Wayland Wood, which meant that he had to pass through the gate on which Mulligan was sitting.

Manners hoped for a moment that he had passed already before the beery man arrived there.

But that hope was only momentary.

Manners himself had followed a short cut that saved half the distance. Silverson was new at St. Jim's, and he knew nothing about the short cuts through the wood. He would have to follow the footpath.

So, although he had left the school before Manners, it was fairly certain that he was not yet half-way along that footpath.

He would come along that footpath; and, unless Mulligan shifted before he arrived, he would run right into the man whom he believed, so far, to be waiting for him at Abbotsford Railway Station.

Such was going to be the outcome of Monty Lowther's deep-laid scheme of pulling his leg over the telephone.

If he met Mulligan he would learn at once, of course, that he had been tricked, and would not go on by train to Abbotsford.

If he turned back he would get back to St. Jim's before half-time in the football match.

Keeping back in the trees out of sight, Manners watched the man on the gate anxiously.

Mulligan finished his cigarette and threw away the stump. Manners hoped that he would go.

But he did not go. He drew a crumpled newspaper from his pocket and began scanning it. Obviously, he was a fixture.

Ten minutes passed, and then there was a footstep on the path through the wood. Manners, keeping in cover, looked in that direction.

It was Silverson.

The new master of the St. Jim's Fourth was striding along at a good rate, anxious to get to Wayland Station for his train. So far he had not the slightest doubt of the genuineness of that telephone call, and he dared not fail—as he supposed—Mulligan.

Manners watched him, with a dark brow.

He saw the man on the footpath glance at the man on the gate ahead and give a surprised start. Then he broke into a run.

He had seen Mulligan.

Manners glanced at his watch. It was exactly half-past two. The ball was being kicked off on Little Side at St. Jim's. The House match was beginning, with Blake, D'Arcy, Herries, and Levison of the Fourth in the School House ranks.

"Mulligan!"

Manners was near enough to the gate at the end of the footpath to hear the angry, surprised exclamation of the master of the Fourth.

Mulligan was seated facing the road. He stared round over his shoulder at Silverson's voice.

"Hallo!" he said. "Fancy meeting you!"

"You fool!"

"Wot?"

"What does this mean?" exclaimed Silverson shrilly. "Did you guess that I should come this way, or what? Why are you not at Abbotsford?"

The red-faced man stared at him blankly.

"Why'd I be at Abbotsford?" he asked. "There ain't no racing at Abbotsford to-day."

"You told me on the telephone—"

"Wot?"

"When you rang me up at the school—"

"You been a-pushing of 'em back?" asked Mulligan. "I ain't rung you up at no school as I knows of!"

"Are you mad? You rang me up to say that you had to get out in a hurry, and were taking the three train from Abbotsford—"

The astonishment in the red face caused the master of the Fourth to break off.

"Did you not?" he hissed.

"Course I didn't!" answered the astonished Mulligan. "Why should I? Ain't you warned me umpteen times never to ring you up at the school?"

Silverson panted.

"I've been tricked!" he said hoarsely. "I've been tricked! Get off that gate; step into the wood! I must not be seen speaking to you!"

He gave a hurried glance round. Anyone might have come along the footpath, and James Silverson certainly did not want to be seen in conversation with a man of Mulligan's character. But there was no one in sight.

"O.K.," said the astonished racing man.

He swung over the gate and joined the master of the Fourth on the footpath. It was at that moment that Manners of the Shell had a brain-wave.

The two men were about to step into the screen of the trees, out of view of anyone passing. But for the moment they stood together by the gate, clear in the autumn sunlight.

In that moment Manners' camera clicked.

That faint click, at a little distance, was not noticed by either of the men on the footpath. They saw nothing of Manners, and heard nothing of him.

A few moments more and they had stepped

out of view—trees and bushes hid them from sight on the other side of the footpath.

But the camera had clicked.

Manners smiled—a grim smile.

He had snapped James Silverson, master of the St. Jim's Fourth, in company with Jimmy Mulligan, racing man and billiards sharper of the Black Bull. He had placed on record a picture that James Silverson would find it very hard to explain, if it came to that.

They were out of sight and out of hearing now. Manners of the Shell walked on to the gate, and went out into the Wayland road. His destination now was the photographer's in the High Street. There was a film in Manners' camera that he wanted developed and printed at the earliest possible moment. It was, Manners hoped, going to be a trump card for him to play!

ALL RIGHT FOR JAMES!

JAMES SILVERSON stood in the thick under-woods, safe from passing eyes, his face pale with rage, his eyes fixed on the red, surprised face of his disreputable associate.

He could not understand—yet!

From what Mulligan had said, he had not telephoned. That meant that the master of the Fourth had somehow been tricked. But why, and by whom, he could not yet understand; neither was he sure that the racing man was telling him the truth. He was enraged, exasperated, puzzled, perplexed.

"Now, tell me what this means," he said, in a low, savage voice. "I was called up on the telephone, and your name was given—"

"I ain't called you up, and you can lay to that!" answered Mulligan. "You've been spoofed."

"You told me—at least, I was told—that you had to get away in a hurry, and asked me to meet you at Abbotsford Railway Station, to lend you your fare to London!" hissed Silverson.

"My eye!" said Mulligan.

"It was not you?"

"Course it wasn't!" grunted Mulligan. "It wouldn't be a noo thing for me to 'ave to 'op it quick, but it ain't 'appened. I ain't beating it, as I knows of. I'm doing pretty good business 'ere."

"Then you have been talking to some of your boozy pals at the Black Bull, and one of them has played this fool's trick!" snarled Silverson.

Mulligan shook his head.

"I ain't been talking," he answered. "No covey at the Black Bull has ever heard your name from me. We've 'ad dealings over a good many years, Mr. Silverson, and you ain't never knowed me 'ave a loose tongue."

"Then who—" breathed Silverson.

"It's somebody what knows, if he used my name," said Mulligan; "but it ain't no covey at my end. Better look at yours."

"At my end—at the school, do you mean?" exclaimed Silverson, with a start. "Oh!"

"Some of them young blokes is wise to it, to some extent," said Mulligan shrewdly. "Young Merry must know that I was put up to coming to the school last week. He'd be a fool if he didn't guess that one, seeing as I never knew him from Adam."

"Tom Merry!" said Silverson, between his teeth.

A light began to dawn on his perplexed mind now.

"Well, it was somebody at your end, because it must have been," said Mulligan. "And what young Merry don't know he can guess. Ringing you up, and giving my name, jest to give you the jitters, I reckon."

"Oh!" breathed Silverson.

Mulligan grinned.

"You've been took in," he said. "You've 'ad your leg pulled. Betcher them young kids is grinning over it now—starting you off in a 'urry for nothing."

Silverson gritted his teeth with rage.

He did not doubt now that the call had come from the St. Jim's end. That showed that someone there suspected his connection with Mulligan. And as he had so immediately obeyed that telephone summons, that suspicion must have become a certainty. But who—

"It was not Tom Merry," he said, at last. "I passed him as I left, and he had been under my eyes for some time. He could not have telephoned. He was standing within sight of my study window when the bell rang."

"One of his pals?" said Mulligan.

"No doubt—no doubt! But why—"

"Jest to give you the jitters, and make you 'op over to Abbotsford for nothing," grinned Mulligan. "Mebbe they've got some trick on while you're out."

James gave a jump.

"Oh!" he exclaimed.

He understood then, in a flash.

"Think that's it?" asked Mulligan.

"I know it is! I can see it all now!" said James, between his teeth. "It's all clear now—quite clear! The football match, of course—of course! That was the reason! I should not have been back till after the football match if I had not met you here. I see it all now!"

James certainly saw it all now. He was not very quick on the uptake, but Mulligan's hint was enough.

Tom Merry had been determined to get the men he wanted for the House match. With James on the spot, taking them in "extra" school in the Fourth Form Room, that was impossible. But with James off the scene, what was to prevent it?

Monsieur Morny assuredly would not go hunting for juniors who did not turn up as his detention class. He would note them as absent, and report their absence to their Form-master.

That was it!

While he was standing there, talking to the beery man from the Black Bull, Tom Merry was playing football with the men he wanted in his team, in defiance of their Form-master.

That was why James had been called off the scene by that spoof telephone call.

Now that he thought of it, James Silverson was as certain of it as if he could have seen the detained juniors playing on Little Side.

The rage in his face made Mulligan stare at him curiously.

"You got it?" asked the man from the Black Bull. "They're up to something while you're out."

"Yes," breathed James, "and I know what."

He turned away without another word, cut back to the footpath, and hurried back the way he had come, leaving Mulligan staring.

James covered the ground with long strides in the direction of St. Jim's.

He knew now how and why he had been tricked. He knew what he would find when he

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arrived at the school. And he had, at the moment, only one thought in his mind—to get back to the school as soon as he could, and prevent the captain of the Shell from getting away with it.

But his pace slowed after a time. He slowed more and more, and came to a stop at last by the time he reached Rylcombe Lane.

James was thinking.

It occurred to him, as it had occurred to Manners, that this was exactly what he wanted.

The savage scowl on his face was replaced by a sardonic grin.

Nothing could have happened better if he wanted to land Tom Merry into trouble with authority—if he wanted to make him out to be reckless, defiant, disrespectful, a headstrong and troublesome boy, with no respect for law and order. And that was exactly James' game.

Tom Merry was playing it for him!

James smiled—a very unpleasant smile. He no longer thought of hurrying back to the school and intervening in that football match. Let them get by with that, and let Tom Merry face the music afterwards.

He would be sent up to the Head for this. Trouble with his Form-master would be followed by trouble with his headmaster. James would not have stopped that football match, now that he had had time for reflection, for any consideration whatever.

He had another reason for not returning to the school, on reflection. Whoever had phoned knew that he had fallen for that trick, as he had hurried away immediately after taking that call. So Tom Merry knew of his connection with the man Mulligan.

Supposing he mentioned that name when he came before the Head? He could prove nothing, certainly. But it would be as well for James to make it clear that he had not gone to Abbotsford, that he had not seen Mulligan that day.

Luck favoured James. As he stood in Rylcombe Lane, thinking it over, Mr. Selby, the master of the Third, came in sight from the direction of the school.

Selby, evidently, was walking down to the village that afternoon. James stepped out into the lane and joined him.

He exchanged a few words with the Third Form master, and they walked on to Rylcombe together.

James smiled as he walked. If Mulligan's name was mentioned, if anything was said about that sudden rush over to Abbotsford, it would transpire that he had walked to the village with Mr. Selby.

Selby's company was not, in itself, exhilarating. But James was smiling as pleasantly as if he thoroughly enjoyed it.

FACING THE MUSIC!

"DID we beat them, deah boys?" smiled Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

"Did we?" grinned Jack Blake.

The footballers were in the changing-room after the game. The School House men looked as if they enjoyed life.

It was the first House match of the season, and the School House had pulled it off. Figgins & Co. had put up a good game, as the heroes of the New House always did. Nevertheless, School House had beaten them.

The score was four to three. Talbot of the Shell had put in the first for his House; Levison of the Fourth had put in the second; Arthur Augustus D'Arcy had scored the third.

Then there had been ten minutes to go, with scores equal. And almost as the whistle went, Arthur Augustus had put the pill in, in spite of the wary watchfulness of Fatty Wynn in the New House goal. Gussy had beaten Fatty Wynn—and beaten the whistle—by a hairsbreadth. In the changing-room, Gussy's aristocratic features wore an expansive smile—a smile that wouldn't come off.

There was going to be trouble to follow when Silverson came in, of course. Did Gussy care a boiled bean about that? Gussy did not!

A fellow who had scored two goals in a House match could hardly be expected to care a bean, boiled or otherwise, for lesser things.

Gussy was walking on air. He did not care if Silverson gave him six for cutting detention. He did not care if the Head gave him a whopping. He did not care for anything in the wide world just then, excepting those two goals. Gussy was in the mood of the classic gentleman who was like to touch the stars with his sublime head!

"Now for the row!" said Blake
"Blow the wow, old chap!" said Arthur Augustus. "What can Silverson do? He can't wub out those goals! Does anythin' else mattah?"

"Not a bean!" said Tom Merry, smiling.
"Silverson can't be back from Abbotsford yet," remarked Monty Lowther.

"Suah he went to Abbotsford, deah boy?"
"I've got an idea that he did."

"Well, whethah he is back or not, he can't wub out those goals!" chuckled Arthur Augustus.
"We have licked the New House, deah boys."

"We have—we has!" said Herries. "Did you notice that one I stopped from Figgins? It was a near thing."

"Yaas, wathah! A miss is as good as a mile, Hewwies! We have beaten the New House, deah boys, and Silvahson can wage and woah as much as he jollay well likes! Silvahson can go and eat coke!"

Tom Merry and Monty Lowther left the changing-room and strolled down to the gates. They wanted to see Manners when he came in—just to let him know that paid had been put to the New House in that Soccer match. Manners had been very dubious about that deep-laid scheme. But even Manners would have to admit that it was all right now that the New House had been happily defeated.

"It was a jolly good wheeze, Tom!" said Monty.

"The best you ever thought of, old bean," answered Tom cheerily.

"What do you think will happen, Tom?"

Possibly Monty was feeling a twinge of doubt now that it was too late.

"A row, I suppose," answered Tom. "It was worth it! We wanted those men to beat the New House—and we've beaten them."

"Manners thinks that rat will make capital out of it."

"Let him!"

"You may get sent up to the Head."

"I know!"

"Well, it doesn't do a fellow any good at

school to be sent up to his headmaster," said Monty, a little uneasily.

"I know! It can't be helped. Why grouse?" asked Tom cheerfully. "I'd do exactly the same thing over again. Hallo, there's the Worm!"

Mr. Silverson came in sight on the road, walking with Mr. Selby. They were coming back from Rylcombe.

Lowther looked rather perplexed.

"He's back rather early from Abbotsford," he muttered—"and where the dickens did he pick up Selby?"

Tom shook his head. Silverson certainly was back early, if he had gone to Abbotsford. Not that it mattered now. Half an hour ago it would have mattered a good deal.

The two masters came in at the gates. Silverson did not glance at the Shell fellows, though they knew that he noticed them standing there.

"A very pleasant walk, Mr. Selby," they heard him remark. "Though really I must blame myself a little—I should really have been taking some boys of my Form in 'extra' school."

"Indeed?" said Mr. Selby.

"Monsieur Morny was kind enough to take them off my hands," said Mr. Silverson. "And really, I could not resist a walk in this pleasant autumn weather—and in such pleasant company, if I may say so, Mr. Selby."

The two masters walked on—leaving Tom Merry and Monty Lowther staring at one another.

"Silverson meant us to hear that!" whispered Lowther.

Tom nodded.

"That means that he guesses who phoned—one of us! He'd like us to believe that he never fell

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for it, but just went walking out with old Selby."

"But he has been walking with Selby," said Tom. "He spoke as if they'd been together all the time, or nearly all the time."

"Yes—that's queer! He must have been to Abbotsford," said Lowther, puzzled. "You saw him rush off after that phone call. He never rushed off like that to walk around with Selby."

"No—I suppose not! Anyhow, he went," said Tom. "So that's all right, whether he's been to Abbotsford or not. I wonder where Manners is?"

"Oh, he won't be back before lock-up, when he's let loose with that dashed camera of his!" grunted Lowther. "But, I say, now Silverson's back the band is going to begin to play, Tom."

"Let it!" said Tom.

"I—I can't help thinking that perhaps old Manners was right!" muttered Monty. "He's got a jolly long head on him, Tom."

Tom Merry laughed.

"It's a bit late in the day to start thinking of that, Monty! We've won the House match!"

"Um!" said Monty.

The two Shell fellows continued to wait for Manners—but Harry Manners did not appear in the offing. Both of them, however, were thinking of what was now to come. Silverson was back, and he would hear from the French master that there had been four absentees from the detention class.

Blake and Herries, D'Arcy and Levison, would be called to account without delay. No doubt they were already in Silverson's study. All that was a matter of course. But what was coming to Tom Merry?

Silverson would make the most of it. That was a certainty. Exactly what would he be able to make of it? Tom could not feel sure about that—only he knew that trouble was coming. It was not comfortable—but he was quite cool and cheerful—he would have done the same thing over again had it been still to do. So he waited calmly.

Darrell of the Sixth came down to the gates.

"You're wanted, Merry," he said. "House-master's study."

"Yes, Darrell," answered Tom quietly.

The two chums walked across to the House, and Tom went to the School House master's study, leaving Monty Lowther waiting for him—and feeling more and more uneasy.

Tom half-expected to see Silverson in Mr. Railton's study. But he found the House-master alone.

Mr. Railton's face was unusually grim.

"I have sent for you, Merry, after hearing a most surprising and extraordinary statement from Mr. Silverson!" he said.

"Oh!" said Tom.

"Certain boys of Mr. Silverson's Form were under detention this afternoon," said Mr. Railton. "As Mr. Silverson went out they were instructed to appear in Monsieur Morny's detention class. Four of them failed to do so—Blake, D'Arcy, Levison, and Herries."

"Yes, sir."

"They have admitted to Mr. Silverson that they deliberately disregarded detention to play football!" said Mr. Railton.

"They were wanted in the House match, sir," said Tom. "Mr. Lathom never gave a man

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detention on match days. As football captain, I asked Mr. Silverson to make it another date for 'extra,' as Mr. Lathom would have done at once—and as you would have done, sir."

"Mr. Silverson has told me of this, and that he was unable to accede to your request as it was couched in such insolent language!" said Mr. Railton.

"That is not the case, sir!" said Tom.

"Did Mr. Silverson report your insolence on that occasion to your Form-master?" exclaimed Mr. Railton, "or did he not?"

"He reported me to Mr. Linton, sir."

"Did Mr. Linton cane you—or did he not?"

"He did, sir."

"Quite so! It appears, then, that your Form-master was satisfied that you had been insolent to Mr. Silverson."

Tom was silent. There was no denying the fact that Mr. Linton had given him "six" for cheeking the Fourth Form master.

"Now, Merry," went on the Housemaster. "You are in the Shell, and somewhat older than the Fourth Form boys. You are in a position of authority, as junior captain of your House. If these Fourth Form juniors were so thoughtless, so reckless, as to disobey their Form-master's orders to play football, it was for you to refuse to play them in your team."



"Outrageous defiance of authority cannot be allowed to pass in this matter to Dr. Holmes, and you will appear

Tom was silent.

It was true enough, and he had nothing to say. He believed that he had done right, in view of the fact that Silverson had acted from personal enmity. But it was no use saying that to a Housemaster.

"Mr. Silverson takes the view," went on Mr. Railton, "that the responsibility falls on a boy in a position of authority, like your own, much more than on the actual delinquents. His view is, in short, that you led the Fourth Form boys into this act of disobedience and defiance. I must now ask you whether the suggestion came from you that they should fail to report for detention."

"Yes, sir!" said Tom.

"You admit that you suggested to these Fourth Form boys that they should play football instead of going in to detention as ordered?" exclaimed Mr. Railton.

"Yes, sir! As junior football captain——"

Mr. Railton held up his hand.

"That has nothing to do with this matter," he said. "Games can never be allowed to interfere with school discipline, Merry, as you know very well. Do you maintain that a football captain has a right to give orders in opposition to those given by a Form-master to the boys of his own Form?"



ed to pass," said Mr. Railton. "I shall report this before your headmaster in the morning, Merry!"

"No, of course not, sir!" stammered Tom.

"I should imagine not!" said Mr. Railton. "Do you imagine that the captain of the school would play a senior boy who had been detained by his Form-master, in defiance of that Form-master?"

"No, sir."

"Do you, then, as junior captain, assume rights and powers denied to the captain of the school?"

Tom's face was crimson.

"Of course I don't, sir! Nothing of the kind."

"Then what excuse have you to give for this act of outrageous defiance of authority?" demanded Mr. Railton.

Tom set his lips.

There was nothing for him to say, unless he said that the temporary master of the Fourth was a snake in the grass, seeking to put him in the wrong by stealthy and underhand means. And that was not the sort of thing any fellow could say. He stood silent.

"Very well!" said Mr. Railton at last. "Mr. Silverson takes so serious a view of this, especially with regard to your influence over boys in his Form, that he insists upon the matter going before the headmaster."

"He would!" said Tom between his set lips.

"From what you have been able to say, I must say that I agree with Mr. Silverson!" said the Housemaster sternly. "Such an act as this cannot possibly be allowed to pass. I shall report the matter to Dr. Holmes, and you will appear before your headmaster in the morning, Merry."

"Very well, sir!" said Tom quietly.

"I am sorry," said Mr. Railton, "that a boy whom I have hitherto regarded as a credit to his House, and his school, should have to submit to the disgraceful punishment of a flogging! But if you allow a wilful and headstrong temper to lead you astray in this manner, Merry, you will find that authority is too strong to be treated with contempt. You will go to the headmaster's study after prayers in the morning."

"Very well, sir!"

Mr. Railton made a gesture of dismissal, and Tom Merry left his study with burning cheeks and a burning heart.

MANNERS IS MYSTERIOUS!

MANNERS came in at the school gates swinging his camera-case by its strap, looking very cheerful and contented. Anyone glancing at Harry Manners could have guessed that he had had a pleasant afternoon out with his camera.

He found some less cheery faces in the quadrangle.

Study No. 6 stood in a group, looking neither cheery nor contented. Manners glanced round for his chums, but Tom Merry and Monty Lowther were not to be seen out of the House.

He crossed over to Blake & Co.

"How did it go?" he asked.

"The House match! Oh, we won that!" said Blake. The enthusiasm of that victory over the rival House was fading a little in view of what had followed.

"Yaas, wathah!" said Arthur Augustus. "But——"

"It was played out, then?" asked Manners. "Played to a finish?"

"Yes; why not?" asked Herries.

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"I mean, the Worm didn't crawl in and interrupt?"

"No; that was all right."

Manners nodded. He had wondered a little whether Silverson would follow the dictates of malice and anger, or whether he would realise that Tom Merry was playing his game for him, and let him get on with it. Evidently the latter had been the case.

"Four goals to three," said Digby. "I was in detention, of course—no good cutting for nothing. But these chaps—"

"Silverson's come in now?" asked Manners.

"More than an hour ago," grunted Blake. "He came in before tea. I fancy he guessed something—he went to Mossos at once, and got it from him that we had cut—and we were called on the carpet at once."

"Licked?" asked Manners.

"No; wonders will never cease!" said Blake sarcastically. "Silverson chose to look at it that we'd been dragged into it by Tom Merry—he said that he regarded him, as an older fellow and football captain, as responsible—older by a few months!" added Blake, with a snort.

"We told him—" said Herries.

"Yaas, wathah! We jolly well told him we were feahfully keen to play Soccah, and that we did it at our own wisk, and entirely of our own accord!" said Arthur Augustus. "But it was no use—he was wesolved to put it on poor old Tom Mewwy—he's got a down on Tom Mewwy! I don't know whethah you've evah noticed that, Mannahs—"

"Eh?"

"But I am suah of it," said Arthur Augustus. "He has a down on poor old Tom Mewwy, and he was lettin' us off lightly, so as to land it all on Tom! The fellow is a wat—a tweachewous wat!"

"Rats get caught!" remarked Manners. "But you don't mean to say that the Worm has let you off altogether?"

"Oh, no; two hundred lines each, and 'extra' on Saturday, instead of to-day," grunted Blake. "We don't care twopence about that! But Tom Merry's going up to the Head!"

"Is he?" said Manners grimly.

"It's all over the school," growled Blake. "He had to see Railton, and got it from him! He's sent up."

"When?" asked Manners.

"After prayers in the morning! It's a flogging, of course—Railton said so. I suppose we've been rather fools!" Blake clenched his hands. "But that cur has no right to put it all on Tom! He jolly well knows that we were all keen on it—just as keen as Tom Merry."

"The rat!" growled Herries.

"The worm!" said Digby.

Manners nodded, and went on to the House. He passed a good many serious faces in that House.

Everybody knew that Tom Merry was "for it"; that he was to be sent up to the Head. And nearly everybody was concerned about it. It was extremely unusual for Tom Merry to be in trouble with the "beaks," and this spot of trouble was of unusual gravity.

A flogging was painful enough—but that was the least of it. It was a disgrace.

It put the junior captain of the School House on a level with Racke of the Shell, who had been

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flogged for "pub-haunting." It made him, to a good extent, a "dog with a bad name."

Manners went up to the Shell passage to Study No. 10. He found his two chums there.

They were having tea—not in the best of spirits.

Tom Merry's face was dark with anger. Monty Lowther was worried. Monty rather wished by that time that he had never thought of pulling Silverson's leg that afternoon.

Tom, on the other hand, did not. His enemy had made him out to be in the wrong, but he was in the right, and he did not regret what he had done. He would have done it over again. He would never have been wanting in respect to a schoolmaster; but he had no respect for a rogue who was playing a schoolmaster's part for his own purposes.

But he was feeling the matter keenly. He had held his head high at St. Jim's; but a headmaster's flogging would bring it low enough.

"Oh, here you are, old man!" he said, as Manners came in and dropped his camera on the shelf. "Heard?"

"Yes, just heard," said Manners. "Glad you beat the New House."

Tom smiled.

"Yes, we beat them," he said. "That cur can't wash that out, at any rate!"

"I'm afraid you were right, Manners, old bean," said Lowther dismally. "That rat has managed to land the whole thing on Tom. He's even let the Fourth Form men off with lines to make his case look better."

"Well, I'm glad of that," said Tom Merry. "I'm responsible, and I'm ready to take the responsibility, too. I—I only hope that old Miss Priscilla won't hear about the flogging, that's all."

"You don't think the Worm will take care that she does hear, you fathead?" asked Manners sarcastically.

Tom started a little. He had not thought of that.

"Oh!" he said. "I—I suppose he will."

"Bank on it!" said Manners. "Isn't that his game—to get you blackened in that quarter, you ass? But that rat won't get by with it, I think, this time. That rat is going to meet a rat-catcher."

"Eh?"

"What?"

Manners smiled.

"What do you think I've been doing this afternoon?" he asked.

"Rotting about with that rotten camera, I suppose," grunted Lowther. "Do you ever do anything else when you get loose?"

"Taken some good pictures, old chap?" asked Tom, with a visible effort. In the present state of affairs it was not easy to get up much interest in Manners' hobby.

"One very good one," said Manners. "I should have been back before, but that picture was such a corker that I went to the photographer's to get it developed and printed. They told me twenty-four hours, as usual, and I told them to forget all about that, and waited till it was through."

Lowther gave him a glare.

"You ass!" he hooted.

"Hallo! What's biting you?" asked Manners.

"You can think about that piffle when Tom's up for a flogging in the morning!" exclaimed Lowther.

"Photography isn't piffle," said Manners. "It's a very useful hobby—jolly useful at times."
 "Oh, rats!"
 "Then you don't want to see the picture?" smiled Manners.
 "Blow the picture!" snorted Lowther.
 "It's all right, old chap!" said Tom hastily.
 "You know Manners is potty on his blessed camera. It's all right."
 "It is," said Manners. "Much more than you think. Monty doesn't want to see that picture."
 "Take it away and bury it!" growled Lowther.
 "And you don't, Tom?" said Manners, laughing.
 "Well, just now I'm a bit worried, old chap," said Tom. "Never mind, trot it out, and let's see it."
 Manners chuckled.
 "No; I'll let you see it later. I'm going to show it to another man first."
 "Oh, all right!"
 "Silverson," added Manners, going to the door. The two juniors stared at him.
 "Getting friendly with the Worm?" asked Lowther sarcastically.
 "Not exactly. But it's such a nice picture, I think Silverson may change his mind after he's seen it, and stop Tom going up to the Head," said Manners.
 "Potty!" asked Lowther, while Tom stared blankly.
 "You'll see," answered Manners; and he walked out of the study, leaving Tom and Monty staring. A couple of minutes later he was tapping at Mr. Silverson's door.

MANNERS MAKES TERMS!

JAMES SILVERSON glanced round at the tap on his door.
 "Come in!" he said.
 Manners of the Shell came in.
 Mr. Silverson stared at him. He was certainly not expecting to see one of Tom Merry's chums.
 "What do you want, Manners?" he snapped.
 "Only a word with you, sir," said Manners respectfully. "Since I came in, I've heard that a friend of mine is to be sent up to the Head in the morning. I was wondering, sir, whether you might think about it again."
 James Silverson stared at him.
 Then he smiled—a cat-like smile.
 He understood, or thought that he did. Tom Merry's chum had come there to try to beg Tom off. He was not likely to have much luck. Tom Merry was exactly where his enemy wanted him. James was already thinking out a letter to old Miss Priscilla, at Laurel Villa, Huckleberry Heath, deploring the reckless, headstrong, rebellious ways into which Tom had fallen, which had caused him to be sentenced to a flogging by his headmaster.
 "I am afraid I cannot discuss that matter with you, Manners," said Mr. Silverson. "You may leave my study."
 "It's rather a disgrace for a fellow to be flogged, sir," said Manners.
 "Quite!" assented Mr. Silverson.
 "If you spoke to Mr. Railton, sir, it could be stopped now. If you told him that, in view of our keenness about the House match, you had decided to overlook the matter, and, in fact, wash out the whole thing—"

"Have you come here to be impertinent, Manners?"
 "Yes, sir."
 James rather jumped at that answer.
 "Upon my word!" he exclaimed. "I shall report this to your Form-master, Manners."
 "Why not report it to the Head?" asked Manners.
 "Wha-at?"
 "I'd be glad to see the Head along with Tom Merry," said Manners, with icy coolness. "I'd like to show him a photograph I took this afternoon."
 "Are you out of your senses, Manners?" exclaimed Mr. Silverson. He was almost too astonished to be angry.
 "Not at all, sir. I've brought the photograph here to show you," said Manners. "I feel sure that you'll be interested. I took it this afternoon, just after half-past two, at the gate on the Wayland road by the wood."
 James sat quite still.
 He knew where he had been at half-past two. He knew with whom he had been talking at the footpath gate. Manners had seen him with Mulligan. That flashed into James' mind at once.
 There was a long moment of silence in the Fourth Form master's study. James broke it at last in a slightly husky voice.
 "Did you say that you had taken a photograph?"
 "Yes, sir."
 "Let me see it."
 "Certainly, sir! I thought you'd be interested," said Manners blandly.
 From a little paper case, such as photographic prints are packed in, Manners drew a print. He laid it on Mr. Silverson's table.
 James fixed his eyes on it.
 It was a good clear photograph, like all that were taken by Harry Manners. It showed two men standing side by side on the footpath in Wayland Wood, just within the gate. One was James Silverson, the other the man Mulligan who, a week ago, had come to the school, and had been thrashed by Mr. Railton. Both faces came out with perfect clearness.
 James paled as he looked at it.

That Tom Merry and his friends suspected his connection with the beery, racing man at the Black Bull, he knew. The telephone call proved that. But suspicion mattered little.
 This was proof.
 It did not directly affect the matter on which

(Continued on the next page.)

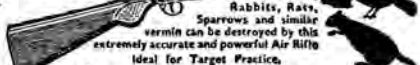
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Tom Merry was now in disgrace. But it proved, beyond the shadow of a doubt, that James Silver-son was in association with the boozy blackguard at the Black Bull—the man who had come to St. Jim's and made a false accusation against Tom Merry. If that snap was seen by the Head or the Housemaster, what was James going to say?

He kept cool with an effort.

"Is this the only print you have, Manners?" he asked.

"Yes, sir; I had only one copy printed!"

The next instant James' grasp closed on the photograph, and he crumpled it and threw it into the fire.

Manners laughed. He had expected that.

"Now, you insolent young knave—" said James, between his teeth.

"Don't be in a hurry, Mr. Silver-son!" said Manners. "I still have the negative!"

"The negative?" repeated James, with a start. He had forgotten that.

"From which I can take as many copies as I like!" said Manners. "I'm thinking of having a few dozen taken, to give to my friends up and down the school!"

James Silver-son panted.

"Where is the negative?" he muttered huskily.

"Where you won't lay hands on it, Mr. Silver-son!" answered Manners coolly. "If you would like to have it I'm quite willing to give it to you—without taking any more prints from it—if—"

"If?" breathed James.

"If you will be so kind as to see Tom Merry through!" said Manners, with sarcastic respect. "Perhaps, sir, on second thoughts, you may explain to Mr. Railton that you feel you were to blame for having refused to let Tom have his footballs to-day, and that, in the circumstances, you request him to dismiss the whole matter without any report to the headmaster."

James sat breathing hard.

He was trying to make mental calculations—how much harm that photograph would do him if it were made public in the school.

Exactly how it would turn out he did not know, but he knew that it would shake his position at St. Jim's very seriously—that any explanation he could make must be regarded with more or less doubt.

He knew, in fact, that he could not afford to let that snapshot be seen—which meant that he had to let his victim go; that he had to submit to dictation from this junior in the Shell; that it was defeat instead of victory!

It was not easy for James to get it down. He could barely restrain himself from grasping his cane and laying it round Manners with ringing swipes. His eyes burned with rage.

But he had to get it down.

"Give me the negative!" he said at last in a low voice shaking with fury. "I—I will reconsider—"

"Thank you, Mr. Silver-son!" said Manners. "I felt sure that you would do the right thing after thinking it over. I will hand you the negative in break to-morrow morning, if that will suit you."

James' eyes burned at him.

He hardly expected Manners to trust him, and Manners certainly did not. He was to have that telltale negative—after Tom Merry was clear; not before!

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"You—you promise to take no further prints from it!" he muttered in a choking voice. He had to trust Manners.

"Certainly! I've said so."

"Very well. Now go."

Manners went, smiling. James was not left smiling. James was left tramping about his study rather like a tiger in a cage, in the worst temper ever!

SILVERSON CLIMBS DOWN!

BUMP!

Yell!

The bump was caused by the podgy person of Baggy Trimble of the Fourth landing on the floor of the junior day-room. The yell was caused by the impact. Baggy did not seem to like it.

Blake glared at Baggy as he sat and yelled.

"Now get up again!" he hooted.

"Yow-ow-ow!" roared Baggy.

"And I'll give you another!"

"Wow! Ow! Yow!"

Baggy sat where he was. It appeared that he did not want another.

"Yaas, wathah!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "Woll the fat boundah over and wag him!"

There was a crowd of fellows in the room. Most of them were discussing the House match, and what had followed. The happy savour of victory seemed to have been taken away by the disaster to Tom Merry.

Baggy Trimble had expressed the opinion that a flogging might do Tom Merry good. He was, in Baggy's valuable opinion, cocky, and a Head's flogging might take him down a peg or two.

Tom Merry was in the room, but he disdained to take heed of Baggy's cackle. Jack Blake took a different view. Hence the bump and the yell! "Boot the tick!" growled Herries.

"Look here, you know," gasped Trimble, "can't a fellow say what he likes, blow you?"

"Of course he can," agreed Blake. "If any fellow wants to ask to be booted, he can ask all right, and he can get what he asks for!"

"Yaroooooh!"

"Look here, leave Trimble alone!" said Racke of the Shell. "Who's Tom Merry that he shouldn't be flogged when he kicks over the traces, I'd like to know?"

"So you agree with Trimble, do you?" asked Blake.

"Yes, I do!" retorted Racke.

"All serene! Bag him!" said Blake.

As one man, Study No. 6 bagged Aubrey Racke.

The next moment Aubrey was sorry that he had butted in. Four pairs of hands swept Aubrey off his feet, and he smote the floor with a resounding bump. His yell rang more loudly than Trimble's.

"Now boot them both out!" said Monty Lower.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Hear, hear!"

Racke and Baggy rolled into the passage, with vigorous assistance. They departed, dusty and vociferous.

Manners came into the room. He glanced round for his chums and joined them.

"Railton wants you, Tom!" he said.

Tom's lip curled.

"Does he want me again?" he asked. "I

thought Railton was done with me. It's the Head's turn to have a cut next."

"I fancied he would want you, so I hung about to carry the message," answered Manners cheerfully. "Silverson's been in his study."

"The rat! Had he forgotten some rotten lie or other?" asked Tom contemptuously. "I've half a mind not to go."

"Better," said Lowther anxiously.

Manners drew a deep breath. A sense of injustice, a feeling of being caught in the toils of a cunning enemy, had put Tom Merry in a temper to play his enemy's game; there was no doubt about that. Manners had checkmated Tom's enemy only in time to save his chum from worse trouble.

"Keep cool, old man!" he muttered.

Tom's eyes gleamed.

"I'm not going!" he said. "If Railton chooses to let that cur pull his leg, and make use of him for his dirty tricks—"

"Shut up, old man, for goodness' sake! Look here, it's all right!" said Manners. "Silverson has called it off—"

"Don't be an ass!"

"I tell you he has!"

"Merry," said the Housemaster, "Mr. Silverson has been here, and I am glad to say that he is prepared to take a more lenient view of your offence. He is prepared to believe that you acted only thoughtlessly, without any intention of disrespect or defiance of authority. He is not only willing that the matter should not be reported to your headmaster, but has requested me very earnestly not to report it."

Tom stood silent.

But for what Manners had told him in the day-room, he would have been amazed. Now he knew that, as Manners had expressed it, the Worm had crawled because he had had no choice in the matter.

"I am glad," went on the Housemaster, "that Mr. Silverson takes this view. I have acceded to his request that the matter shall go no further. I recommend you, Merry, to let this be a warning to you, and not to allow your keenness for the school games, laudable in itself, to lead you into thoughtless and reckless actions in opposition to authority. The matter is now at an end, by Mr. Silverson's request. You may go."

"Thank you, sir!" said Tom quietly.

He left the Housemaster's study.

A crowd of fellows stared at him when he came

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"Why should he, fathead?" said Tom. "Hasn't he got me just where he wants me now—making a fool of Railton and landing me with the Head? I can see the rat calling it off!"

"Well, he has, because I jolly well made him!" said Manners in a low voice. "Understand now?"

"What the dickens do you mean?"

"I mean," said Manners, very quietly, "that this afternoon I spotted him and his beery pal together and snapped them with my camera, and Silverson is ready to crawl to any extent to get hold of the negative. Now do you catch on, you ass?"

Tom Merry stared.

"Oh, my hat!" breathed Lowther. "Was that the picture you were telling us about in the study?"

"That was it."

"You've seen Silverson?"

"Yes."

"And he—"

"Crawled!" said Manners. "He's a worm, isn't he? He crawled like one!"

"The rat!" exclaimed Tom Merry.

And he left the day-room and repaired to his Housemaster's study.

Mr. Railton looked much less severe than on the former occasion.

back into the day-room. Twenty voices inquired at once:

"What did Railton want?"

"What's up now?"

"What's the latest?"

Tom Merry laughed.

"O.K.!" he answered. "I'm let off with a caution. I'm afraid Trimble will be disappointed. The flogging won't do me any good; I'm not getting it, after all. Silverson has climbed down!"

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Blake. "Well, that beats it!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Then it's all right?" asked a dozen fellows at once.

"Right as rain!"

"Hurrah!"

"Yes, wathah!" trilled Arthur Augustus. "Hip, hip, hurrah!"

The next morning in break Manners, according to contract, handed Mr. Silverson a negative. Mr. Silverson did not thank him for the gift. Probably he was not feeling in a thankful mood.

Next Wednesday:

"GUSSY PUTS HIS FOOT IN IT!"

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THE REBELS' VICTORY!

By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

A NIGHT ATTACK!

"FRANKY!"

"Hallo, Bob! You awake?"
Bob Lawless threw aside his blanket and sat up on the floor of the school-room at Cedar Creek. There were five other fellows rolled in blankets on the floor. A tallow candle burned on a desk, shedding a dim light through the school-room, casting flickering shadows upon the shuttered windows.

It was midnight.

Frank Richards was pacing to and fro near the sleepers, keeping watch and ward through the night.

The rebels of Cedar Creek were still holding the fort, roughing it with undaunted determination. Outside, the winter darkness lay on the woods and the creek, and the wail of the wind could be heard in the pines.

Frank Richards stopped in his pacing as his Canadian cousin sat up.

"Not your time yet, Bob," he said. "I was going to call you in a few minutes."

"I heard something, Franky."

"Only the wind."

"I guess not."

Bob Lawless rose to his feet, his face very alert. Vere Beauclerc opened his eyes and looked up from his blanket.

"Anything up?" he asked.

"I guess so."

Beauclerc rose at once.

The three schoolboys listened. The wind from the Thompson Hills was singing in the pines, but something more than that had come to Bob Lawless' keen ears. A low, faint sound was audible as Frank listened intently, though he could not tell what it was or whence it came.

"That's not the wind," muttered Bob.

Frank shook his head.

"I guess they're on the warpath again," said Bob in a low voice. "It's a night attack, I reckon."

He listened again.

"Old man Gunten is getting pretty desperate," went on Bob. "We know that the school superintendent from Kamloops has arrived at Thompson, and he's come up the valley to inquire into this affair, Franky. Mr. Gunten never thought this would happen when he worked it for the board to sack Miss Meadows. He won't dare let the superintendent find the school like this if he can help it. I guess he's trying to play a trump on us."

"Likely enough," agreed Frank. "If he could get us downed before the superintendent came on the scene it would be better for him. This state of affairs doesn't reflect much credit on the chairman of the board of trustees."

"I guess not," grinned Bob. "Listen!"

Creak!

"Come on!" muttered Bob. "Tread light. Don't let them hear you."

The other fellows were awake now. Bob mut-

tered a word of caution to them as he trod lightly from the school-room.

In the house adjoining, the sounds, faint as they were, were clearer, and they came from above.

Bob and his comrades trod softly up the stairs. One of the upper windows of the schoolhouse looked over the almost level roof of the big school-room, and it was at that window that the sounds were being made.

The chums of Cedar Creek knew what was happening. In the silence of midnight the enemy, probably concluding that the schoolboy garrison were asleep, had mounted to the school-room roof, and an attempt was being made to force the upper window without giving an alarm. Once within the schoolhouse and at close quarters, Mr. Gunten's followers had no doubt of being able to deal with Frank Richards & Co.

In the darkness of the room a faint gleam came from the shutter of the window, already pierced from without.

Frank Richards set his teeth hard. He had been keeping watch below, but he had not noted the faint sounds made above, and the garrison had run the risk of being taken by surprise.

Bob Lawless approached the window and looked through the gash in the shutter. He did not go too close, however, for a saw was working through, enlarging the opening that had been already made.

Outside, a burly figure was standing on the school-room roof, his shoulders on a level with the shutter. Bob dimly made out the figure, but the man outside could see nothing in the blackness within.

The schoolboys made no sound, waiting for some signal from Bob, who was leader of the barring-out at Cedar Creek School. Bob did not speak. He listened quietly to the grinding of the saw as it was plied by the burly man without.

A voice came from without—a voice the chums knew well—the fat, oily tones of Mr. Gunten.

"Are you through yet, Four Kings?"

"I calkerlate it's only a few minutes now, boss."

"Lose no time."

Four Kings, the leader of the Red Dog crowd of Thompson, chuckled softly.

"I guess they're fast asleep, boss. It's all O.K.!"

"They may awake," muttered Mr. Gunten nervously.

"Waal, I'm close on finished. Tell Euchre Dick to be ready."

"I'm hyer, I guess," came back another voice.

Then there was silence, save for the grinding of the saw.

Bob Lawless groped for his companions and led them away to the stairs again. It was impossible to speak in the bed-room without giving the alarm to the enemy without. On the stairs Bob whispered softly.

"It's as I reckoned, you chaps. Old man Gunten is there himself. He's scooted up the ladder after those toughs. I guess he means to

get us before the superintendent arrives on the scene."

Frank Richards chuckled softly.

"He doesn't know we've seen the superintendent already," he murmured.

"He can't know that," grinned Bob. "I guess the man will be along here to-morrow, perhaps with the sheriff. Old man Gunten wants us down, and his precious new headmaster established before Mr. Superintendent appears. I guess it won't work out like that."

"We can shift them off that roof fast enough," murmured Beauclerc. "What's the game, Bob?"

"Better than that. We're letting them come in!"

"What?"

"They won't be through for some minutes yet. Lots of time. We'll get ready for them."

"But," said Frank Richards doubtfully, "there's only seven of us now, Bob, and there are those two roughs—Four Kings and Euchre Dick—and old man Gunten; and I dare say Mr. Peckover is there; perhaps others. We shan't have much chance against that crowd at close quarters."

"They're not getting to close quarters," said Bob coolly. "That window is too small for more than one man to get in at a time. We're going to wait inside with some ropes ready."

"Oh!" murmured Frank.

"We shall take them one at a time, and perhaps bag the whole bunch," grinned Bob. "Then, when Mr. Superintendent moseys along to-morrow, we'll have the whole gang tied up to show him."

Frank suppressed a chuckle.

"Good egg, if we can work it!" he said.

"I guess we can work the raffle," said Bob. "You fellows stay here, and I'll be back in two shakes."

Bob Lawless went quickly and quietly down the stairs to call up the rest of the garrison. Frank Richards and Beauclerc remained listening intently to the sounds from the bed-room. The saw was still grinding steadily, and the critical moment was approaching.

BAGGED!

"QUIET!"

It was a scarcely audible whisper from Bob Lawless on the staircase. There was hardly a sound as the garrison of the backwoods school came up; they had removed their boots below. They reached the landing and peered in at the open door of the bed-room.

The night was dark, but it was darker within than without, and they could make out the gap in the shutter, larger now as the saw did its work.

Inside the gap a hand groped from without, feeling for the bars. There was a grunt of satisfaction from Four Kings as the ruffian found a bar and removed it from the sockets.

"Take this hyer, Mr. Gunten," the schoolboys heard him mutter, as his hand was withdrawn with the bar in it.

"Good!"

"Don't drop it; I reckon the clatter would wake all the valley."

"Take this, Euchre Dick," came Mr. Gunten's



With a grunt the burly ruffian came through the window—quite unaware that Frank Richards & Co. were waiting in the darkness to collar him.

voice. "Hand it to Mr. Peckover on the ladder."
"Right, boss!"

The schoolboys within grinned. The enemy had not the faintest suspicion that their stealthy attack was known, and that their whispers were audible to the garrison they intended to take by surprise.

Without a word, for they were too close to the enemy to speak, Bob Lawless made his dispositions in the dark bed-room. Frank and Bob and Beauclerc drew nearer the window, Bob holding a lasso looped ready in his hand. The other four fellows were farther back, grasping their cudgels in case they should be wanted, and Eben Hacke carrying two or three more ropes.

In deep silence they waited.

Frank Richards had a sack in his hands, which was to be slipped over the ruffian as he came in, to silence him.

Creak!

Four Kings' brawny arm came through the opening again, his hand groping for the other bar. He found it and extracted it and passed it out to Mr. Gunten on the school-room roof.

Then the shutter creaked as it was cautiously opened. In the dim square of the open window, from which the glass had been knocked out in a previous attack, the head and shoulders of Four Kings came into sight. The ruffian peered into the room, listening. But in the blackness within he could see nothing, and the waiting schoolboys made no sound, though their hearts were beating fast.

A hoarse whisper was heard.

"It's all O.K., boss!"

"Lose no time!" muttered Mr. Gunten nervously.

"I guess I'm going in now. You come arter me, Euchre Dick; and then you and Mr. Peckover, boss."

"You—you will want me?" muttered Mr. Gunten.

"I guess there's seven of the young varmints," said Four Kings. "Every hand will be wanted, I reckon. There'll be a rumpus, boss. But we will handle them all right."

"Very well; go on!"

The schoolboys heard every word, and they were somewhat relieved. It was evident from Four King's words that there were only four to deal with, and that the rest of the Red Dog crowd were no longer on the scene.

It had been, a rather desperate move of Mr. Gunten's to employ that gang of ruffians against the schoolboy rebels, but when they had attacked the school the cowboys from the Lawless Ranch had chipped in and cleared them off. And Billy Cook, the ranch foreman, had warned them impressively of what would happen to them if they raided the school again.

Evidently the ranchman's threats had been efficacious; for, of all the rough gang, only Four Kings and Euchre Dick were assisting Mr. Gunten in this last attempt to "down" the schoolboy rebels. But there were enough of them to deal with seven schoolboys if they came to close quarters.

If Bob Lawless' device succeeded, however, they were not likely to be able to tackle the garrison in a body.

Four Kings put his head and shoulders through the little window and began to climb in. He had not the remotest suspicion that Frank Richards &

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Co. were within a few feet of him in the darkness, waiting. With a grunt, the burly ruffian came through the window and lowered himself quietly upon the floor within. He turned back to the window.

"All O.K.!" he muttered. "You next, Euchre Dick!"

Then Four Kings gave a gasp. From the blackness three pairs of hands suddenly fastened upon him, and before he knew what was happening he was dragged down. The sack was pulled over his head as he fell and drawn tight, and the next second the loop of the lasso was round him, tightening.

The surprise had been so complete that the ruffian was reduced to helplessness almost in a twinkling. His mouth was open to yell, but a rough hand compressed the sack over it, and he only succeeded in gurgling. He struggled for a moment before the lasso secured his arms to his sides, and he was dragged across the room.

Then the rest of the garrison seized him and held him fast while the rope was knotted and knotted again.

Frank Richards stepped back breathlessly to the window. Euchre Dick's head and shoulders were framed there against the dim sky. The ruffian had heard something within, and was listening.

"All O.K., Four Kings!" he whispered.

"All O.K.!" whispered back Bob Lawless.

"Right!" murmured Euchre Dick, little guessing from whom that answering whisper proceeded.

He began to climb in.

Four Kings, on the floor, was still attempting to struggle and yell, but his limbs were grasped in strong hands, and the sack was compressed over his mouth, almost suffocating him. In the grasp of the four schoolboys, he was whirled out on the landing, where Eben Hacke stuffed a handkerchief in his mouth to make sure of him.

Meanwhile, Euchre Dick was climbing in. He dropped lightly on the floor. Frank Richards seized him at once and bore him down.

Bob Lawless had hoped to secure the rascals one after the other, and so make a complete "bag" of the whole party. But his luck did not hold out.

As Euchre Dick was dragged down, with Bob's hand over his mouth, his boots crashed on the floor, and Mr. Gunten, outside, uttered a sudden exclamation.

"Quiet, there! Have you fallen? Quiet, you fool!"

Euchre Dick was struggling. He had no chance with three pairs of hands on him, down as he was, but he succeeded in getting his mouth free for a moment.

"Look out, boss!" he panted.

Mr. Gunten was peering in at the open window. He started back as Euchre Dick panted out the warning.

"What—what is it?" he exclaimed in a shrill whisper. "What—"

Euchre Dick was unable to say more. Vere Beauclerc's handkerchief was stuffed into his mouth, and he was reduced to silence. Frank Richards & Co. quietly knotted rope about his arms and legs and left him lying on the floor.

But the alarm had been given. Old man Gunten, instead of following Euchre Dick in at the window, was standing there, staring and peering, in nervous alarm.

"Is it all right?" he whispered. "Answer me, Euchre Dick—Four Kings! Where are you?"

There was no answer. The fat storekeeper's

alarm increased; he was certain now that something had gone wrong with the attack. He could see nothing, but he could guess that the garrison had not, after all, been taken by surprise. He peered anxiously into the shadowed room.

Bob Lawless waited a few moments, in the hope that the fat Swiss would follow in, but it was pretty clear that Mr. Gunten had no intention of entering until he was assured.

The silence of Euehre Dick and Four Kings had alarmed him too much, and he could only conclude that they had fallen into the hands of the schoolboy rebels.

Bob Lawless stepped quietly to the window, where the head of the storekeeper was framed against the sky, peering and listening. Mr. Gunten started back as a black shadow moved before him, but he started back too late. Bob's sudden grip fell upon his collar, and he was dragged in at the window.

So sudden was the pull that the storekeeper was dragged half-way in, and, had he been a lighter weight, Bob would have landed him inside. As it was, Mr. Gunten's fat circumference landed on the window-sill, and he clung to the window-frame with both hands, gasping wildly.

"Lend a hand!" exclaimed Bob.

Frank Richards and Beauclerc did not need telling. They grasped the storekeeper together and dragged. Mr. Gunten uttered a fiendish yell. Frank Richards' grasp was on his fat ears, and, to judge by his yell, Mr. Gunten was feeling the strain.

"Yoop!"

"Pull away!" gasped Bob. "We've got to have him!"

"Yarooogh!"

"Wha-a-at is the matter?" came the quavering voice of Mr. Peckover, the new headmaster of Cedar Creek.

Much against his will, Mr. Peckover had taken part in the night attack, not having the slightest inclination for that kind of business. It was only because he dare not displease the board of trustees who had appointed him that he had consented to join in the attempt.

"Help!" panted Mr. Gunten. "Peckover, you fool, come and help me!"

"Oh dear!"

"Help!" shrieked the storekeeper. "They are dragging me in!"

"B-b-but—"

"Help me, you fool!"

Mr. Peckover picked his way gingerly along the school-room roof to the window and grasped old man Gunten by the shoulders behind. Mr. Gunten clung frenziedly to the window-frame, and Frank Richards & Co. pulled within and Mr. Peckover pulled without.

The unfortunate storekeeper was in the position of a rope in a tug-of-war, and it was a painful position, to judge by his fiendish yells.

Eben Hacke and another fellow got a grip on him now, careless where they gripped, so long as they got a hold. The odds were against Mr. Peckover in the tug-of-war, and he was quite beaten.

With a gasp of anguish, Mr. Gunten was dragged through the window and landed inside. His last frantic kick caught Mr. Peckover on the chin, and that gentleman sat down with a roar.

Inside the room Mr. Gunten was struggling feebly, but he had no chance. In a couple of minutes a rope was knotted round him, and the fat Swiss lay helpless on the floor, gasping spasmodically.

"Now for Peckover!" exclaimed Bob Lawless. Mr. Peckover heard the words, and he jumped up and made for the ladder leading to the ground. He had had enough.

"After him!" panted Frank.

Bob Lawless jumped lightly from the window to the school-room roof, only a few yards behind Mr. Peckover as the new headmaster made for the ladder.

PRISONERS OF WAR!

"OH dear! Oh! Oh!"

Mr. Peckover gasped and spluttered as he scrambled to the ladder and clutched at it. He scrambled wildly down the ladder in the dark, and Bob Lawless, reaching it while he was still in flight, slid down after him.

Mr. Peckover was going down one rung at a time, and Bob descended with a rush, with his arms and legs round the ladder. Naturally, he overtook Mr. Peckover at that rate before the schoolmaster reached the ground.

Mr. Peckover was about two yards from the earth when Bob whizzed into him from above with a terrific crash. The concussion hurled Mr. Peckover off the ladder, and he whirled down and rolled on the ground with a howl.

Bob, rather dazed by the collision, rolled after him.

"Yow-ow-wooop!" came from Mr. Peckover as he sprawled on the ground. "Help! Oh! Ah! Yah! Oh dear! Oh goodness! Yow—"

"Mum-my word!" stuttered Bob.

He scrambled to his feet and blinked round him. Mr. Peckover, rather bruised and quite winded, lay helpless at his feet, gasping, as if for a wager.

"Franky!" shouted Bob.

Frank Richards' head appeared over the edge of the roof. He was rather anxious for his reckless chum.

"All serene, Bob?" he called out.

"All O.K., Franky! Chuck me a rope!"

"Right-ho!"

In half a minute the rope came whizzing down, and Bob Lawless caught it. He ran a noose round Mr. Peckover, who was too winded and too scared to think of resistance, and fastened it under his arms.

He gave a quick look round into the shadows, wondering whether any more of the Red Dog crowd were hanging about the school. But there was no sound or movement from the night.

Bob scudded up the ladder with the end of the rope over his arm, and joined Frank Richards on the school-room roof.

"Got him!" he said. "Lend me a hand and we'll land him like a fish. You come and help, Cherub."

"Coming!" called back Beauclerc.

The three chums dragged on the stout rope, and Mr. Peckover, with a yell of affright, was dragged into the air. The skinny gentleman was not a heavy weight, and Frank Richards & Co. swung him up easily enough. He was landed on the roof, a good deal like a fish, and the chums shoved him in at the bed-room window unresistingly.

He bumped on the floor within, and lay there gasping. There was a loud howl from old man Gunten, upon whose legs he had bumped.

The chums followed him in, and Bob closed the shutter.

"I reckon we've got the whole gang," he remarked. "But I'll nail up this shutter. Can't be too careful."

Eben Hacke had lighted a lantern, and Yen Chin ran for the hammer and nails. In a few minutes the shutter was safe again.

Then the rebels gave their attention to their prisoners. Four Kings and Euchre Dick were relieved of their gags, but they were left bound hand and foot, and Bob gave a careful eye to the knots. He did not want to chance the ruffians getting loose within the school.

A torrent of abusive language came from both the bad men of Thompson, but a vigorous application of boot leather soon put a stop to that.

Old man Gunten sat with his hands tied behind him, glowering at the rebels in speechless fury. The fat storekeeper was boiling with wrath, and if he had been free he would probably have tried to do some damage.

As for Mr. Peckover, that forlorn gentleman sat silent and apprehensive. It was pretty clear from his looks that Mr. Ephraim Peckover had had enough of Cedar Creek and its unruly scholars. Probably he was sorry by this time that he had accepted Mr. Gunten's offer of the post that rightly belonged to Miss Meadows.

"Nice-looking family, aren't they?" grinned Bob Lawless. "Take 'em downstairs, you galoots! You can kick 'em a little if they give any trouble."

But the prisoners did not give any trouble; they did not want to be kicked, even a little. The four were hustled down the stairs and taken into the school-room, where they were disposed on the floor.

"I guess you kids can snooze if you like," said Bob Lawless. "I'm going to keep watch. It's some hours to dawn yet."

The schoolboy rebels took Bob's advice and turned in, Bob and Beauclerc keeping watch by turns till dawn.

THE GAME UP!

"**W**AKE up!" The winter dawn was stealing through the rifts of the schoolhouse shutters. At Bob Lawless' stentorian yell, the schoolboy rebels turned out of their blankets and set about preparing breakfast.

There were ample provisions now, Frank Richards & Co. having smuggled a good supply into the school the previous day from Cedar Camp.

Four Kings and Euchre Dick looked dolefully at one another as they heard the clatter of knives and forks from the dining-room. The two ruffians were feeling very "down."

Somewhat to the surprise of the prisoners, food was brought to them when the schoolboys had finished breakfast.

"Let a galoot's hands loose, can't you?" growled Four Kings.

"No fear!" answered Frank Richards promptly. "Open your mouth and shut your eyes!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The prisoners were glad enough to get their breakfast on any terms, and the grinning Co. fed them with their hands still tied. Even Mr. Gunten, furious as he was, condescended to eat and drink, though with gleaming eyes and scowling brow.

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Mr. Peckover was very meek and mild. The new schoolmaster had intended, in the first place, to reduce Cedar Creek to order by a series of severe punishments; but by this time all the ferocity had been taken out of him, and if one thing was quite certain, it was that Mr. Peckover was fed up with his present position. He was looking very thoughtful and very glum as he sat after breakfast on a bench, and he called to Frank Richards at last.

Frank was looking through a slit in the shutter into the playground when his name was called, and he looked round.

"Hallo!" he said. "What's wanted?"

"I want you to set me free," said Mr. Peckover.

"Can't be did!"

"If you will set me free I will leave this place at once," said Mr. Peckover. "I only want to get clear of you all."

"Oh!" said Frank, and he looked at Bob.

"Can't trust you!" said Bob decidedly.

"I am in earnest!" exclaimed Mr. Peckover. "I tell you that, after what I've been through here, nothing will induce me to accept the position of master of this school. Such a set of young ruffians—"

"What?"

"I—I mean that I refuse to come here as headmaster!" stammered Mr. Peckover. "I—I did not mean to make an opprobrious remark. I mean what I say, Mr. Gunten."

"Well?" snapped the storekeeper.

"I resign the post you offered me!" said Mr. Peckover. "In fact, I refuse to take it up. If you do not choose to reinstate Miss Meadows you must look further for a new headmaster."

The storekeeper scowled. This desertion was the last straw, as it were, and his rage turned upon his follower.

"You were glad enough to bag the post!" he snorted. "You were turned out of your school in Saskatchewan for ill-treating a pupil. You couldn't have got another post. You wrote and asked me to use my influence to get you appointed here, in Miss Meadows' job. You asked me to turn her out, if I could, and make room for you. Now you round on me, you cur, because you've been roughly handled by a parcel of kids. How am I to face the superintendent and tell him I've sacked Miss Meadows and haven't got a Head for the school?"

"Please yourself! I'm not staying!" Mr. Peckover's temper was rising. "Hang your school and you, too!"

Old man Gunten almost foamed with rage. He strode towards Mr. Peckover, and as he could not use his hands he made a drive at the skinny gentleman with his boot. Mr. Peckover hopped out of the way just in time.

The enraged storekeeper was following him up when Bob Lawless jerked him back, and he sat down on the floor with a yell.

"Naughty!" said Bob chidingly.

"Yow-ow!"

"I guess we can let Peckover go!" said Bob, laughing. "I don't wonder he's fed-up, and I reckon he wouldn't keep his job here if we'd let him, when the authorities began to inquire into his antecedents. Peckover, my boy, you can go; and if you're not clear of Cedar Creek in five minutes we'll come after you!"

"I shall be only too glad to go!" said Mr. Peckover, with a gasp.

The grinning schoolboys released Mr. Peck-

over, and he was allowed to drop out of the window into the playground.

"Five minutes!" said Bob warningly.

The five minutes were quite enough for Mr. Ephraim Peckover. He hurried to the corral for his horse and rode away from the gates of Cedar Creek, and speedily disappeared on the trail.

Four Kings and Euchre Dick, both in a very subdued mood, begged to be allowed to go like the new Head; but their request was refused on the spot. The two ruffians were not to be trusted, for it was pretty clear that they would back up Mr. Gunten so long as he paid them dollars for it.

As the morning advanced Mr. Gunten grew more and more uneasy and savage in temper. He seemed to think at first that the schoolboys would not venture to keep him a prisoner for long; but he found out his mistake. At last he made up his mind to speak.

"Lawless!" he rapped out.

"Hallo, old jay!" said Bob cheerily.

"I—I guess I'm willing to come to terms," said Mr. Gunten, biting his fat lip. "I can't stay here any longer. I've got to attend to business at my store."

"Will you reinstate Miss Meadows as headmistress of Cedar Creek?" asked Vere Beauclerc.

"No!" roared Mr. Gunten.

"Then you can shut up!"

"I'll agree to anything else!" hissed the storekeeper.

"Nothing else will be of any use."

"I'll make it worth your while to stop this foolery!" exclaimed Mr. Gunten desperately. "What do you say to ten dollars each?"

"Oh, don't play the goat; we don't want your money! And we know why you're so jolly anxious," said Frank. "We know the school superintendent from Kamloops is at Thompson."

Mr. Gunten started.

"You—you know?" he ejaculated.

"Ha, ha! Yes!"

"It—it is false!"

"It's true," said Bob Lawless, laughing. "We've seen the man—Dr. Macfarlane."

"That's the galoot!" grinned Eben Hacke.

The storekeeper stared at them. He was evidently taken aback.

"How did you know?" he stammered at last.

"Because we met him yesterday," said Bob. "We made a break to Cedar Camp to get in some grub here, and on the way back we found Dr. Macfarlane in the grip of that precious pair of ruffians." He pointed to Four Kings and Euchre Dick. "They'd got him down in the trail, and were robbing him, when we chipped in. He was coming to Cedar Creek when they roped him in, but he went back afterwards to Thompson—to call on you, I guess. And he knows the whole story from our side; we told him before we knew who he was."

Mr. Gunten breathed hard. This was news to him, and his expression showed how unpalatable it was.

"By gum!" murmured Four Kings. "That galoot—was that the school superintendent? We never knowed it, boss. We took him for jest a stranger in the section."

"Fool!" roared Mr. Gunten. "You have ruined everything. You—you actually attacked him while in my employ! Fool! Ruffian! What can I say to him now?"

Four Kings shrugged his shoulders.

"We didn't know the galoot," he said.

Mr. Gunten gritted his teeth with helpless rage. Matters were turning out rather seriously for him. It was no light matter for the school superintendent to learn that he was employing against the rebels of Cedar Creek a gang of ruffians who were capable of highway robbery. His seat on the board of trustees was not likely to remain his much longer.

"Lawless!" he exclaimed desperately. "Let those men loose!"

"Rats!"

"They must be gone before Dr. Macfarlane arrives here!" panted the storekeeper.

"We're keeping them to show him!" said Frank Richards, laughing.

The unhappy storekeeper breathed wrath. He was beginning to feel that the game was up, and that it had been won by the rebels of Cedar Creek. He had planned that night attack on the rebels, hoping to get the upper hand of the rebellion before the superintendent came on the scene, knowing that Dr. Macfarlane had arrived at Thompson.

He had not been aware that the doctor had visited the precincts of Cedar Creek the previous day to get first-hand information of what was going on there; still less had he dreamed of what had happened during the superintendent's visit.

The worried trustee was still pacing to and fro, with a corrugated brow, when there was a clatter of hoofs in the playground.

Frank Richards looked from a window.

"The merry superintendent!" he exclaimed. And he threw open the shutter and saluted Dr. Macfarlane.

VICTORY!

THE superintendent rode up to the window and looked into the school-room. He raised his eyebrows at the sight of Mr. Gunten with his hands tied, and Four Kings and Euchre Dick lying bound on the floor.

"Good-morning, sir!" said Bob Lawless cheerily.

"Admit me to the house, please," said Dr. Macfarlane.

"That depends," said Bob coolly. "We're holding the fort here, sir, till our schoolmistress comes back. No disrespect to you, sir, but those are our terms."

"Hear, hear!"

The superintendent made no reply, but he put his foot on the window-sill, and leaped into the room.

The schoolboys did not oppose him. It was easy enough to deal with one man if necessity arose. But they had the impression that Dr. Macfarlane did not come as an enemy.

"Tell those boys to release me, sir!" rapped out Mr. Gunten.

The superintendent did not heed; he was looking at Four Kings and Euchre Dick, who tried to avoid his glance.

"Those are the two men who attempted to rob me in the wood yesterday, when those lads came to my rescue!" he exclaimed.

"The very pippins, sir!" said Frank.

"They are in your employ, Mr. Gunten?"

"I got their help to reduce these young rascals to order," replied the storekeeper sullenly

(Continued on page 36.)



JUMPING THE CLAIM!

“WELL, here we are at Greyfriars!” Jack Drake made that remark.

His chum, Dick Rodney, grinned.

“Yes, here we are!” he agreed. “We arrived rather dramatically, and there’s a licking to come for upsetting the brake.”

“Never mind the licking—it hasn’t come yet,” said Drake cheerily. “I’ve been thinking that—”

“While the Head was jawing you in his study?”

“Since we’re in the Remove here,” said Drake. “Same Form as Wharton and Bob Cherry, and that crowd.”

“Yes, that’s the Lower Fourth here,” said Rodney. “But what—”

“Well, we’re going to have a study.”

“I suppose so.”

“And the sooner we bag it the better,” said Drake. “First come, first served, you know—and we’re the first comers.”

“But—” began Rodney doubtfully.

“At St. Winifred’s, the studies were bagged at the beginning of the term, you know.”

“But that mayn’t be the custom here.”

“We’ll institute it as a custom, then,” said Drake coolly. “Now, where’s the Remove quarters? I say, Bunter.”

Billy Bunter was hovering at hand.

The Owl of the Remove was bestowing genial smiles on the two new juniors. New boys were Bunter’s game; they did not know him like the other fellows, and it was often possible to extract from a new boy an advance upon his celebrated postal order, which was always coming, but never seemed to arrive.

“Yes, old chap,” said Bunter, coming up at once. “Like me to show you where the tuckshop is?”

“Never mind the tuckshop now. You’re in the Remove, I believe?”

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THE STUDY-JUMPERS!

By Frank Richards.

“Yes, rather.”

“Where are the Remove studies?”

“I’ll show you,” said Bunter obligingly. “Follow me, old fellow. Up this staircase—now over the landing—and now up this stair—this is the Remove staircase, you know, and any other fellow coming up here is chucked down on his neck. And this is the Remove passage.”

“Good!”

There were two or three Removites in the passage, but, as yet, few of the Form were in their quarters. There was a buzzing crowd downstairs, and in the quadrangle, and another buzzing crowd in Mrs. Mimbie’s little shop behind the elms. But the two new juniors had the Remove quarters almost to themselves for the present.

“Studies not arranged yet, I suppose, Bunter?” asked Drake.

Billy Bunter blinked at him through his big spectacles.

“Chaps generally take the studies they had last term,” he said.

“Not always?”

“Well, generally. If you bag a chap’s study, there’s likely to be a scrap. I’d like to see anybody bag my study,” said Bunter warmly. “I’d jolly well wallop him, I can tell you.”

Drake chuckled. Billy Bunter did not look exactly the fighting-man his words implied.

Drake glanced into Study No. 1.

It was vacant, so far as occupants went. There wasn’t very much furniture, either; and what there was showed many signs of wear and tear. It was evident that the furnishings of Study No. 1 had seen service. But it was a very pleasant study, with a window on the quadrangle.

“This will about suit us,” remarked Drake.

“First rate,” said Rodney.

Bunter jumped.

“I say, you fellows, this is Wharton’s study!” he ejaculated. “Wharton and Nugent, you know.”

“You mean it was Wharton’s last term?” asked Drake.

“This term, too, I fancy. Wharton and Nugent will jolly soon fire you out if you bag this study.”

“My dear chap, it’s bagged. If Wharton and Nugent want this study, they should bag it instead of loafing around the quad,” said Drake. “It was first come, first served at St. Winifred’s, my old school.”

“Never heard of it,” said Bunter. “I say, Drake, could you fight Wharton?” Billy Bunter eyed Drake very curiously, a new idea apparently working in his fat brain.

"Whether I could or not, fatty, I don't mean to. I like Wharton; I spent part of the holidays at his place."

"You'll jolly well have to if you bag his study. Wharton is cock of the walk in the Remove."

"Oh, we're going to change all that," said Drake cheerily. "Wharton's a nice chap, but he can't have my study. Perhaps we'll let him share it with us."

"Your study?" ejaculated Bunter.

"Mine!" said Drake.

Dick Rodney grinned assent. What was good enough for St. Winifred's was good enough for Greyfriars.

"I say, you fellows, there'll be a row," said Bunter.

"Bow-wow!"

"But you're right," continued the Owl of the Remove, nodding his head sagely. "There's no rule really on the subject, and a chap can bag any study he likes. That is, if he can put up his hands, you know. You fellows have this study, and I'll dig in with you—"

"Eh?"

"And protect you," said Bunter.

"My hat!"

"I've dug with Todd in Study No. 7," said Bunter. "Todd's a rather mean beast—never seems to know that a chap wants enough to eat. We three'll dig in this study, and Wharton and Nugent can go and eat coke. See? Like me to do some shopping for tea?"

Drake and Rodney stared at the fat junior.

From what they had seen of William George Bunter, they did not yearn for him as a study-mate.

But having bagged the study as first comers, they felt that it would be difficult to refuse; for undoubtedly Billy Bunter was a first comer, too.

"Wharton and the rest are in the Rag," continued Bunter. "We can get fixed before they come up here. Get your things in, and all that, and get hold of the door key. You've seen the Head, and Mr. Quelch, and the House dame, so you won't be wanted again till roll-call. You can stick here and keep guard on the study."

"For a porpoise, you're simply full of good ideas, Bunter."

"Oh, really, Drake!"

"Be it so, as they say on the stage," grinned Drake. "You bring in some supplies for tea."

"My dear chap, that's just what I was thinking of," said Bunter eagerly. "There's rather a good feed in Hall, first day of term; but I don't mind missing it to help you fellows. I've heard that you've got lots of tin, Drake. Hand me a couple of pounds—"

"A couple of what?"

"Pounds, and—"

"You couldn't manage the shopping on a ten-bob note?"

"I'm afraid not. You see—"

"Then we shall have to be satisfied with grub in Hall," said Drake.

"I—I mean to say, I—I could get more value for a ten-bob note than any other fellow at Greyfriars. That's what I really meant to say!" gasped Bunter.

"Here you are, then!"

William George Bunter clutched the ten-shilling note and rolled away. How the "jumping" of Study No. 1 would terminate, Bunter did not know; but it was certain that there was going to be a good spread in the study, and that was all the Owl of the Remove cared about.

So long as the present was agreeable, William George Bunter was prepared to let the future take care of itself.

IN POSSESSION!

"HALLO, hallo, hallo! Here's Coker on the warpath!"

There was a crowd in the dining-hall. On the first day of term, the bonds of discipline were relaxed; or rather, they were not yet tightened. A buzz of voices filled the long, lofty apartment; some of the juniors were sitting on the tables, and nearly all were talking at once. Wingate of the Sixth was at the top table, but the captain of Greyfriars looked with a lenient eye upon a little unruliness on the first day of the term.

Coker of the Fifth came striding in, with wrath on his brow. He came up to the Remove table—the Lower Fourth—with a majestic frown.

"Where's that new kid?" he demanded.

"Echo answers where?" replied Frank Nugent cheerily. "Have you taken a fancy to him, Coker?"

"I'm going to smash him!" roared Coker. "Where is he? He bagged the Fifth Form brake from the station, and I've had to walk. Where's that cheeky young sweep Drake?"

"The wherefulness is terrific, my esteemed and ludicrous Coker," remarked Hurree Jamsset Ram Singh.

"You know where he is, Wharton?"

"My dear old Coker, if I knew I shouldn't tell you," answered Harry Wharton cheerfully.

"Where is he?"

"Bats!"

"I order you to tell me, Wharton!"

Coker made that announcement in the most majestic manner. Possibly, during the holidays, he had forgotten some of the manners and customs of the Greyfriars Remove. Orders from Horace Coker were not likely to be obeyed by that unruly Form.

Harry Wharton laughed.

"Go it, Coker!" said Bob Cherry encouragingly. "You don't know how funny you are! So good of you to entertain us like this on the first day of term!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"The goodness is great, my esteemed ridiculous Coker," chuckled the Nabob of Bhanipur.

"Wharton, you hear me?"

"I could hear you from the other side of the quad, old top," said Wharton. "Run away now, Coker!"

"Wha-at?"

"Run away; you're tiresome!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Instead of running away as he was bid, the great Coker made a plunge at Harry Wharton. In a moment a dozen Removites were on their feet, grabbing at Coker of the Fifth. Coker, much to his own astonishment, rolled under the big table, amid a forest of legs and feet. And it was astonishing how many boots found an opportunity of clumping on the great Coker.

"Yow-ow-wooop!" came in a roar from under the table.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Now then, less noise over there," called out Wingate, from the Sixth Form table.

"It's only Coker, Wingate," called back

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Frank Nugent. "He's got a fancy for rolling about on the floor!"

"Yaroo! I'll smash you—yow-ow-oooooh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Coker rolled out on the other side of the long table, very dishevelled and dusty. He scrambled up and glared at the grinning Removites.

"Come on again, old scout," said Bob Cherry. "I've got some jam to put down your neck!"

Coker did not come on again. It had dawned upon his somewhat slow intellect that the Removites were too many for him to handle. He tramped away, apparently to pursue his quest of the cheeky new boy elsewhere. Bolsover major came in and dropped into a seat, with a red and swollen nose. The Remove bully was scowling.

"That new kid here?" he asked, glaring down the table.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo, you're the second to inquire!" grinned Bob Cherry. "Do you want to bag him for a studymate, Bolsover?"

"I'm going to smash him!"

"Did he give you that nose?" chortled Skinner.

"Coker's going to smash him, and now you're going to smash him," said Harry Wharton, laughing. "Drake seems booked for a lively time!"

"The smashfulness will be terrific."

Bob Cherry rose to his feet.

"You fellows finished? May as well have a look at the studies before calling-over."

"Good egg!"

The Famous Five quitted the dining-hall, and made their way to the Remove passage. Dusk was falling over the quadrangle and the old leafless elms. Lights were beginning to glimmer from the windows of the schoolhouse.

To Wharton's surprise there was a light gleaming from under the door of Study No. 1, and sounds of occupation within.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Somebody's bagged your study, Harry."

"It will jolly soon be unbagged, if so!" said the captain of the Remove.

"Call me if you want any help!" grinned Bob.

Bob Cherry and Johnny Bull and Hurree Jamsset Ram Singh went along the passage to their own quarters. Wharton and Nugent stopped outside Study No. 1.

There was a clicking of teacups, a rattle of knife and fork within, and a murmur of voices.

The chums of the Remove exchanged a queer glance.

"Somebody in possession," said Frank Nugent.

"Looks like it!"

"If anybody's landed himself in our study, they'll—"

"We'll soon see."

Harry Wharton threw open the door of the study and walked in, followed by his chum.

Quite a surprising scene met their gaze.

A cheerful fire burned in the grate, and the light was on. The study table was spread-plentifully. Jack Drake and Dick Rodney and William George Bunter were seated at the table enjoying their tea.

Drake looked up with a genial smile.

"Hallo, Wharton!"

"Hallo!" returned Wharton, rather grimly.

"Quite welcome, of course."

"I hope so!"

"You might knock at a fellow's door before coming in, though," said Billy Bunter, turning

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his big spectacles on the captain of the Remove. "There's such a thing as good manners, Wharton!"

"Why, you cheeky fat porpoise!"

"Oh, really, Wharton—"

"What the thump are you fellows doing in this study?" demanded Nugent.

"Having tea!"

"I suppose you know it's our study?"

Drake shook his head.

"No, I can't say I do. I was under the impression that it was my study."

"Your study?" exclaimed Wharton.

"Yes, that's it."

"Why, you cheeky ass!"

"We've already arranged our books here, and things," said Rodney. "We're quite comfortable, thanks!"

Harry Wharton stared from one to the other. He knew both the new juniors slightly, and he had rather liked them. They rather liked him, as a matter of fact; but there was no room for personal likings to count in the matter now under dispute. Jack Drake had not come to Greyfriars to play second fiddle to anybody in the Remove, if he could help it. The question whether he could help it remained to be thrashed out. It was a question that was likely to take a long time to settle.

Wharton and Nugent were silent for a full minute, taking in the situation, as it were. Drake & Co. continued their tea cheerily.

"Won't you sit down?" asked Drake hospitably. "We've got rather a spread, and you're welcome. In fact, this ought to be a sort of house-warming, in our new study."

"He, he, he!" came from Billy Bunter.

"If this is a lark—" said the captain of the Remove, at last.

"A lark?" said Drake innocently.

"Yes, if it's a lark, never mind; you can finish your tea and clear off!"

"My dear man, we haven't the remotest intention of clearing off out of our own study."

"It's not your study!" roared Wharton, beginning to show plain signs of wrath.

"Your mistake, it is!"

"I tell you it's our study!"

"Another mistake; it isn't!"

"You see," explained Rodney, "at St. Winifred's a fellow bagged any study at the beginning of a term—"

"Bother St. Winifred's—never heard of the place," said Harry Wharton. "Is it a school?"

"Is it a school!" gasped Drake. "Why, you chump—you cheeky ass—you—you—"

"I thought you fellows lived on a barge, or something, before you came here!" said Frank Nugent innocently.

"Ass!"

"Fathead!"

"They were packed on some old cargo tramp," said Wharton.

"It was an old warship, the Benbow!" exclaimed Drake wrathfully. "You know jolly well it was, when you met us on it coming back from our voyage."

"Looked to me like an old floating wash-tub!"

"You silly ass!"

"Well, you fellows have too much nerve for new kids at Greyfriars," said Harry Wharton. "You'd better behave yourselves, or else go back to your barge, or wash-tub, or whatever it was. If you stay in the Remove you will be taught manners."

"Sudden!" said Nugent.

"You can finish your tea," added Wharton.

"I give you ten minutes to get out of the study, bag and baggage. If you're not gone by then you'll—"

"It's our study."

"Yes, rather," said Billy Bunter. "Our study, old scout. You can run away and play, Wharton. Drake's licked Bolsover major, and I dare say he can lick you!"

"Shut up, tubby!" said Drake.

"Oh, really, old chap—"

"He will have a chance to try if he's not out of this study in ten minutes," said Harry Wharton grimly.

And the captain of the Remove leaned on the doorpost, to wait.

WHARTON CUTS UP RUSTY!

"HA, ha, ha!"

"Cheek!"

"Stick it, Drake!"

There was a crowd of Removites outside in the passage now. The news that Wharton's claim had been jumped, as Fisher T. Fish expressed it, had spread like wildfire.

Fellows came from far and near to see how it would turn out.

The sight of the two new juniors, calmly having their tea in Study No. 1, tickled the crowd round the doorway immensely. Bob Cherry and Johnny Bull and Hurree Singh were there, ready to give aid, if required, in ejecting the intruders. But there were a good many fellows in the Remove who were rather pleased to see anybody "up against" Harry Wharton. Skinner and Snoop and Stott, Fisher T. Fish and Trevor called an encouragement to the study-jumpers.

"Stick it, you fellows," said Skinner joyfully. "You hang on to the study, that's my advice."

"I guess so!" chimed in Fisher T. Fish. "You jest hang on to it like grim death to a nigger!"

"Cheeky young sweeps!" said Bob Cherry indignantly.

"The cheekfulness is terrific! The lickfulness will also be great, my esteemed young chumps!"

Harry Wharton waited in silence.

Frank Nugent waited, too, and his kind, sunny face was quite good-tempered. But Wharton's was rather dark. He was exasperated, and his temper was not always good. He was inclined to take this invasion of his quarters rather more seriously than the other fellows.

"I say, Wharton's getting waxy!" announced Billy Bunter. "I know that look in his eye!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bow down, ye slaves, and tremble!" chirruped Skinner. "Wharton's getting waxy! Tremble!"

Wharton crimsoned as there was a loud laugh after Skinner's remark. Ridicule was the thing he found it hardest to bear.

Drake glanced at him rather curiously.

"You know why we've bagged this study, Wharton?" he began.

"I know you're going out on your neck, if you don't walk out," answered Harry Wharton laconically.

"At St. Winifred's, you know—"

"Rot!"

"Give St. Winifred's a rest," suggested Nugent. "We've heard enough about St. Winifred's. We don't want any more about your badge!"

"You silly ass—"

"Time's nearly up!" said Wharton.

Drake hesitated. He had entered into the

"jumping" of the study more as a lark than anything else; but the look on Wharton's face showed him that the matter was growing serious. He remembered how kindly Wharton had met him on the Benbow, when he returned from the voyage on the school-ship; and what a pleasant time he had spent at Wharton Lodge. He did not want to quarrel with Wharton.

But retreat was rather difficult now. The exuberance of Jack Drake's spirits had often landed him in scrapes before. It seemed to have landed him again.

"I'll tell you what, Wharton," said Drake, at last. "Suppose we whack out this study?"

"Rot!"

"You're only two in here, and we shall have to share a study with somebody—"

"There's four in some studies," said Skinner. "There's Morgan, Desmond, Rake, and Wibley in Study No. 6, for instance."

"And there's four in your study, Cherry—you and Inky, and Linley and Wun Lung," said Drake. "Four in here would be all right."

"Nothing of the kind!" said Wharton quietly. "His magnificence is on the merry high horse," grinned Skinner. "Look out for thunderbolts!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I say, you fellows, I used to be in this study, you know," said Billy Bunter. "I'm willing to come back if the new chaps are here. Of course, I couldn't stand Wharton otherwise."

"So you're deserting me, are you, Tubby?" asked Peter Todd, looking in at the door.

Bunter gave him a lofty blink.

"I'm done with you, Toddy! You never understood how to appreciate me while I was in Study No. 7. I'm done with you!"

"Why, you cheeky owl!" exclaimed the indignant Toddy.

"I wash my hands of you!" said Bunter loftily.

"Well, it's about time they were washed!" remarked Ogilvy.

"Oh, really, you know—"

"Time's up," said Harry Wharton crisply. "Are you fellows going?"

Drake glanced at Rodney. As a matter of fact, he would have yielded the point rather than allow the matter to go so far as a real quarrel; but it was not easy to yield to Wharton's present tone. Drake's own back was getting up, so to speak.

"I've made a reasonable proposition, I think," he suggested.

"Rubbish!"

"Our rule at St. Winifred's—"

"I've heard enough about St. Winifred's," interrupted Wharton curtly. "I don't want to hear any more. I want to hear whether you're going!"

The laughter in the crowded passage died away. All the juniors realised that the matter was getting serious now. Skinner closed one eye at his chums. Harry Wharton was a popular captain of the Remove; but he was least popular when he looked and spoke as he did at present.

Drake's eyes flashed.

He had been on the point of yielding, but that mode of address quite drove out any thought of yielding from his mind.

"No, I'm not going," he answered, with equal curtness.

"Then you'll be put out!"

"Hold on, Harry!" murmured Frank. "Keep cool, old chap."

"Who's not keeping cool?"

Frank Nugent gave a hopeless shrug of the shoulders. He knew that his chum was past argument when he adopted that tone.

Harry Wharton came towards the table.

"It's time for you fellows to go!" he said grimly.

Drake rose to his feet, and Rodney followed his example. Both of them were getting angry. Billy Bunter remained seated, and went on attending to the spread. If the other fellows stopped, while there was anything left, so much the worse for them, and so much the better for Bunter. That was the philosophic view the Owl of the Remove took of the matter.

"Hold on, old scout!" said Bob Cherry, coming into the study. "You're not going to fight Drake, Wharton."

"I am, unless he goes!"

"You're not," said Bob coolly. "This isn't a matter to be scrapped about. These chaps have bagged the study, and they can be carried out and deposited in the passage. Easy does it. We'll lift 'em gently, and put 'em down—all hands to the mill."

"Good egg!" said Johnny Bull.

"The goodness is terrific!"

Harry Wharton pushed Bob aside.

"Leave him to me—"

"Rats!"

"Look here, Bob—"

"Look here, Wharton—"

"My esteemed chums, do not begin the esteemed ragfulness in the happy family circle!" urged the Nabob of Bhanipur.

"This is my business," said Wharton. "This

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bounder has bagged my study, and I'm going to shift him."

"Go ahead!" said Drake, as angry as Wharton now. "You won't find it easy!"

"Harry!" exclaimed Bob.

The captain of the Remove did not heed him. He walked round the table, and Drake put up his hands as he came on. The next moment there was a wild and whirling fight going on in Study No. 1.

A DRAWN BATTLE!

"GO it, Drake!" roared Skinner.

"Buck up, Wharton!"

"Go it, ye cripples!" sang out Squiff of the Remove cheerily. "Good luck to both of you!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Both the combatants were "going it" with a vengeance. They were both angry and exasperated now, and they forgot that they had been on the friendliest terms only a week before.

Tramp, tramp, tramp!

Wharton was whirling Drake towards the door, with the intention of pitching him out headlong into the breathless crowd.

They swayed to the door and nearly reached it; but Drake spun his antagonist back again, and they crashed on the table. Then they whirled away together towards the bookcase.

Nugent glanced at Rodney, and Rodney glanced at Nugent. But they did not approach. Neither felt disposed for a struggle of this description; both were sorry it had happened.

Crash!

The struggling juniors went into the window recess, and rolled over there.

"This is as good as a circus," remarked Fisher T. Fish's sharp nose, and the transatlantic youth more than he can chew."

"Shut up!" growled Johnny Bull.

"Waal, I guess—"

"The talkfulness is too much, my esteemed Fishy," murmured the Nabob of Bhanipur. "Dry up!"

A dusky fist was flourished an inch from Fisher T. Fish's sharp nose, and the transatlantic youth decided to dry up.

The two juniors separated and jumped up. Both were crimson and breathless and dusty now.

"Are you going?" panted Wharton.

"No!" said Drake, between his teeth.

"Then—I'll—"

"Oh, come on, and not so much chinwag!" panted Drake.

Wharton rushed on him and they closed again, and staggered across the study.

"Latest thing in jazzing," said Skinner. "Or perhaps you'd call it a bunny-hug."

"For goodness' sake, chuck it, you fellows," said the good-natured Bob Cherry anxiously. "What's the good of scrapping about nothing?"

Crash!

The combatants bumped into the table and set it rocking. Bunter jumped up, with a howl, to escape. They lurched into him, and the Owl of the Remove sat down, with a bump. The next moment the struggling juniors stumbled over him, and rolled across William George. The howl that arose from William George woke all the echoes of the Remove passage.

"Yaroooop!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Don't burst, Bunter!" roared Peter Todd.



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"Yow-ow-woop! Help! Murder!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Cave!" came Ogilvy's voice from the passage. "Here comes Quelch! Quelch's heard the row!"

"Must have been as deaf as Tom Dutton, or a stone image, if he hadn't!" chuckled Skinner.

Mr. Quelch, the master of the Remove, came along the passage, with rustling gown and frowning face. A certain amount of licence was permitted on the first night of the term, but the uproar in Study No. 1 was rather beyond the limit. Mr. Quelch had come to inquire, and he had thoughtfully brought a cane with him.

The crowd of juniors parted to allow the Form-master to pass. Bob Cherry hissed a strong warning to the struggling juniors in the study. Wharton and Drake parted just in time, and scrambled up, red and breathless, as the severe features of Mr. Quelch appeared in the doorway.

"What is all this uproar?" exclaimed the Remove master.

"Oh!" gasped Wharton.

"Ah!" spluttered Drake.

Mr. Quelch eyed them sternly.

"Have you been fighting with the new junior, Wharton?"

"I—I—"

"I need not ask the question," said Mr. Quelch. "Are you not ashamed to fight with a new junior, Wharton, on his first day at school?"

Harry Wharton dropped his eyes, and his

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cheeks burned red. Jack Drake spoke up at once impulsively.

"It was my fault, sir."

"What?"

"I bagged the study," said Drake. "Wharton was turning me out—that's all."

"You—you—bagged—" spluttered Mr. Quelch. "Do you mean to say that you took possession of Wharton's study, Drake?"

"At St. Winifred's it was first come, first served, sir," said Drake. "That was the rule."

"That is not the rule here," said Mr. Quelch, frowning. "This study belongs to Wharton and Nugent, and it is for your Form-master, Drake, to assign you to a study. I should have done so already if you had come to me, as you ought to have done."

"Oh!" said Drake.

"At the same time, Wharton, you are very much to blame, and I am surprised. Drake and Rodney, you are to share Study No. 3, with Ogilvy and Russell. It is a larger study, and there is room for four. If you have brought your things to this study, you must take them away at once."

"Oh, my hat!" said Drake.

"Do not utter ridiculous ejaculations in my presence, Drake."

"Oh! Ah! Nunno, sir!"

"I will remain here while you make the

change," said Mr. Quelch severely. "And if there is any renewal of this disputing, I shall deal severely with all concerned."

Under Mr. Quelch's gimlet eye, Drake and Rodney removed their possessions to Study No. 3; rather to the dismay of Ogilvy and Russell, who had looked forward to having their study to themselves for the term.

In their new study, when Mr. Quelch was gone, Drake and Rodney looked at one another rather grimly.

"Not much good baggin' a study, after all!" said Drake. "We've been done in the eye!"

"This study is all right," said Dick cheerfully.

"Oh, yes, it is all right, but—" Drake

frowned as he dusted down his clothes. "I came here intending to be quite friendly with Wharton. But—I think there's going to be trouble. Does it strike you that there's a little too much of the 'monarch of all I survey' about that young card?"

"Perhaps a trifle," said Rodney, smiling.

"If there's trouble—"

"We shall keep our end up."

"I shall jolly well see that we do!" said Jack Drake emphatically.

And Dick Rodney nodded assent.

That was the fixed determination of the study-jumpers.

Next Week: "THE GREYFRIARS LUNATIC!"

"It is my intention to ask Miss Meadows to resume her position here, pending an official inquiry, and her formal reinstatement. That she will be reinstated I can guarantee."

"Hurrah!" shouted Bob Lawless.

Dr. Macfarlane turned to the rebels, whose faces expressed the most profound satisfaction.

"You have acted lawlessly," said the superintendent. "But I admit the provocation received, and I must say that I admire your loyalty to your schoolmistress. If this affair ends here, and at once, I can undertake that no further mention will be made of what has happened, and that no punishments will be inflicted. Restore order at once, and I promise you that Miss Meadows shall return this afternoon."

Bob Lawless tossed his hat into the air.

"Done!" he exclaimed.

"I am now going to call upon Miss Meadows. Please have everything in order by the time she arrives."

"You bet, sir!"

The superintendent smiled and nodded, and a minute later he was on his horse again, and riding away from Cedar Creek. There was a roar of cheering in the school-room. The rebels of Cedar Creek rejoiced in their victory.

Mr. Gunten, Four Kings and Enchre Dick were turned out at once, and they were glad enough to go. When they were gone the rebels set to work, removing the barricades, repairing the damage so far as they could, and putting everything in order for Miss Meadows.

Eben Hacke was dispatched on a horse borrowed from the stableman, to carry the news round to the farmhouses and call up the rest of the Cedar Creek fellows to give the returning schoolmistress a rousing reception.

Early in the afternoon boys and girls were streaming into Cedar Creek, and there was a big crowd in the playground when Miss Meadows' horse was heard approaching.

There was a ringing cheer as Miss Meadows dismounted before the schoolhouse. Bob Lawless approached the Canadian girl with a meek smile on his mischievous face.

"Ready for lessons, Miss Meadows!" he said.

Cedar Creek School was itself again.

Well, we say au revoir to the Cedar Creek chums for a time. Next week you will meet new pals — Biggles & Co. — in a thrilling adventure. Don't miss the opening chapters of our great new serial.

THE REBELS' VICTORY!

(Continued from page 29.)

"And you considered that that was a right step for a school trustee to take?"

"I did as I thought best!" snapped the storekeeper.

"Very good! I called on you at your store this morning, Mr. Gunten, but found that you were absent. I desired to see you and hear your version of this affair. You are aware, I believe, that I am the superintendent despatched from Kamloops to inquire into this matter. I have seen Mr. Lawless, one of the trustees, and I have called upon Mr. Grimm. There is not the slightest doubt in my mind, Mr. Gunten, that you discharged Miss Meadows, against Mr. Lawless' objections, from personal motives which had nothing to do with her conduct here as headmistress!"

"Sir!" spluttered Mr. Gunten.

"You engaged a new headmaster, who agreed to take back your son, whom Miss Meadows had turned out of the school for rascally conduct. Where is the man? Let him speak for himself!"

"He's gone, sir," said Frank Richards. "He says he's had enough of us, and he's resigned and cleared off. He doesn't seem to like us somehow."

The superintendent smiled slightly. But his face became severe again at once.

"That simplifies the matter," he said. "Mr. Gunten, your conduct during this affair is plain proof that you are not fit to hold the position of school trustee. I am informed that the ruffians you employed would have done serious injury here, even to risking the lives of the boys, but for the interference of the gentlemen from the Lawless Ranch. The whole affair is due to your desire to get rid of a schoolmistress who refused to allow your son to defy all the rules of the school. That is my firm opinion, and that is what I shall report to the authorities."

Mr. Gunten did not answer; he was too enraged to speak. But for the strike in the school his measures would have met with complete success. But he knew that his methods would not bear a close inquiry from the authorities; and having failed to put down the rebellion in time, he knew that the game was up, so Dr. Macfarlane's verdict did not surprise him.

The superintendent waited a moment, and as the storekeeper did not reply, he went on: