

“BIGGLES’ SOUTH SEA ADVENTURE!”

THRILLING  
STORY INSIDE.

THE  
**GEM**  
2P

*The  
Boy Who  
Vanished*





# 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.

**H. K. Snape, of Pendleton, Salford 6, writes:**

Captain of Second and Third? Number of boys in Fourth? Cutts' age? Number of Scots boys at St. Jim's? Any American boys? How many prefects? Captain of the Fifth? Sorry, no snap.

ANSWER: Second no "skip"; Wally D'Arcy captain of Third. Forty in Fourth. Cutts is 17. Kerr only Scot. Buck Finn, American; Clifton Dane, Canadian, not to mention Wildrake. Eleven prefects. Lefevre "skips" Fifth. O.K.?

**Alan W. Hyams, of Godalming, Surrey, writes:**

You stated recently that there are no first copies of the GEM in existence. I beg to inform you I have the first thirty-five copies printed. Also the first copy was printed March 16th, 1907, not March 23rd, 1907, as you said. I hope you will apologise to your other readers for your misstatement. Thank you!

ANSWER: I take my hat off to a reader who has the earliest copies—thirty-five of 'em—intact! I am sorry about the first publication date, but I was quoting from memory, which fails us all at times.

**Albert Maloney, of Walthamstow, E.17, writes:**

Can you box Arthur Augustus D'Arcy?

ANSWER: I don't think any "box" at St. Jim's would contain the noble Gustavus—not even a "hat-box"! Yes, I've had the "gloves" on with Gussy—in a friendly spar—and he's mustard!

**J. Thompson, of Ruabon, nr. Wrexham, writes:**

Who tops the boxing list in (a) the Shell, (b) the Fourth, (c) the Sixth? Top goal-scorer St. Jim's First XI last season? What's Gussy's favourite sport besides walking to the tailor's at Wayland?

ANSWER: On points the Form champions are—(a) Tom Merry; (b) Figgins; (c) Kildare. Top goal-scorer was Knox, who put so many over the bar that he was nicknamed the "top" goal-scorer! However, officially, Kildare netted 38 goals. Gussy's favourite sport after walking to the tailor's is walking back.

**"A Regular, Enthusiastic Reader," of Indramandiram, Peermade, South India, writes:**

So many questions to ask you:

Are Frank Richards and Hilda Richards brother and sister? Are Frank Richards and Martin Clifford chums? Did Frank Richards really go to THE GEM LIBRARY.—No. 1,653.

Canada and live there in the backwoods? Plenty of schools in England, aren't there? Isn't the "Gentle Shepherd" a scream? Do answer 'em all! Best wishes and cheerios for all the St. Jim's chaps!

ANSWER: Frank Richards and Hilda Richards are not brother and sister, but certainly Messrs. Richards and Clifford are the best of pals. Yes, Frank Richards went to Canada to visit his uncle, Mr. Lawless, and stayed. He had several years' schooling at college in England before he left for the backwoods. Agree with you, the "Gentle Shepherd" is a howl.

**Eric "Wms," of Penrhynside, Llandudno, writes:**

I'm thirteen, tough. I can sock guys older than myself. Reason is I'm a six-footer in my socks, weigh ten stone ten pounds, and no kidding. Fifty-six pounds is nothing to me when I do my weight-lifting act. I don't think I boast much, do you? P.S. Wanna fight? P.P.S. Sorry no photo. Cameras bust always!

ANSWER: I don't think you know how to boast, old fellow. Now, if you were to pick up a policeman under each arm and pose for a photograph in front of the Nelson Column in Trafalgar Square, that might possibly be construed as boasting! Of course, in a fight, weight isn't everything. Science "weights" the scales as much as braven. P.S.—Yes, any time you wanna licking. P.P.S.—Sorry no photo; I'd like to have seen what you look like. But don't risk any more cameras!

**D. Warren, of Durban, Natal, writes:**

You should have been answering letters in the GEM long ago. You're good! Answer these, please: (1) Have you ever been to S.A.? (2) Are there any other S. Africans at St. Jim's besides Clive? (3) Kanjy Afrikaans spraat? (4) Who are the prefects at St. Jim's? Thanks!

ANSWER: Never visited S.A.; would like to. Clive is our sole representative. No, I can't spraat South African, or Afrikaans, though I can get what you mean! Prefects: Kildare, Darrell, Langton, Baker, Dudley, Knox, Monteith, North, Rushlen, Webb, Gray. Best wishes for your next "natal" day. May it see the "birth" of good fortune!



# The BOY who VANISHED!

The side door of the Green Man opened and a boyish figure came out. The Fourth Form master's gloating eyes fixed on that figure.

RED !

"WHAT'S that?"  
"Guess!" smiled Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

Tom Merry, Manners, and Lowther couldn't guess. But they were interested.

It was obvious to the three Shell fellows that D'Arcy of the Fourth was up to something. That would have been clear at the most casual glance. But what he was up to was rather mysterious.

The Terrible Three had just come out of the School House. They had their coats on for going out. But they stopped as they saw Arthur Augustus. Gussy was standing by the door of the House—or, rather, he was lurking there. He was watching the doorway like a cat watching a mouse-hole. That Gussy was lying in wait for somebody was as clear as the sun at noonday.

He had a handkerchief in his hand. That handkerchief was wrapped over something that evidently Gussy did not wish to be seen. There were two or three spots of red on the handkerchief which looked as if Gussy might have cut a finger. But he hadn't. The handkerchief was wrapped round something, and the fingers that held it were spotless.

On the noble face of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy

was a cheery grin. He was plainly in happy anticipation of something or other.

"Did you fellows see Silverson as you were comin' out?" asked Arthur Augustus.

"Silverson!" repeated Tom Merry.

"Yaas! I believe the bwute is goin' out—I saw him with his coat on. A light bwown coat," added Arthur Augustus, with a chuckle. "As light as that gwey coat you are wearin', Tom Mewwy!"

"You're waiting here for Silverson?" exclaimed Monty Lowther.

"That's tellin', deah boy!" smiled Arthur Augustus.

"What on earth is the game?" asked Manners.

"That's tellin', too!" chuckled Gussy.

Gussy evidently was in a merry mood. The Terrible Three, on the other hand, looked serious. They knew now what was up—Gussy was waiting there for Mr. Silverson, the new master of the Fourth, and he had something hidden in his hand for Mr. Silverson.

**EXCITING NEW LONG  
STORY OF YOUR  
ST. JIM'S FAVOURITES**

by

**MARTIN CLIFFORD**

Every fellow in the St. Jim's Fourth—and a good many fellows in other Forms—disliked Silverson. He had been nicknamed the "Worm," and everyone agreed that the name suited him. But if Gussy was thinking of japing Silverson in the quad in broad daylight, it was too dangerous a

game for his friends to want to get on with it.

Gussy was not lucky in his japes. He had gummied Silverson's armchair once—and Mr. Linton, the master of the Shell, had sat in it. He had fixed up a sooty booby-trap for Silverson—and Mr. Railton, the Housemaster, had got the benefit of it! Now, it seemed, Gussy was at it again—and nobody but Gussy was likely to think that he would be successful.

"I'd give Silverson a miss, Gussy," said Tom Merry.

"He bites!" said Lowther.

"Too jolly dangerous, old fellow!" said Manners.

"Don't you wowwy!" said Arthur Augustus cheerfully. "It's all wight! You can stand wound, if you like, and look on when that wat comes out."

"But what—" asked Tom uneasily.

"Silverson's goin' to be wed!" grinned Arthur Augustus.

"What?" ejaculated the Terrible Three together. "Not Silverson!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Blessed if I've heard anything of it!" said Tom Merry.

"I shouldn't think anybody would have him," said Monty Lowther.

"If that's true, he will be leaving, I suppose," said Manners. "I thought he was here till old Lathom came back. But how do you know, Gussy?"

"Eh?"

"Who told you?" asked Tom.

"Nobody! I'm tellin' you!"

"But even if he's going to be wed, what are you hanging about waiting for him for?" asked Lowther.

"I don't undahstand you, Lowthah! I am goin' to make him wed."

"You're going to make Silverson—"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Potty?" asked Manners blankly.

"Weally, Mannahs—"

"Well, what the dickens do you mean?" exclaimed Tom Merry.

Really, Arthur Augustus's statement was rather extraordinary. It was surprising enough if Silverson was going to be wed—but Gussy's statement that he was going to make him wed really looked as if the swell of St. Jim's was wandering in his noble mind.

"I twust I make my meain' cleah," said Arthur Augustus. "Keep it dark, of course, if I tell you. I've got a squirt in this hanky—"

"A squirt?"

"Yaas—with wed paint in it!"

"Oh!" gasped the Terrible Three together.

They grasped it now. It was Gussy's beautiful accent that had caused the misunderstanding.

"Oh, you ass! You mean red!" exclaimed Tom.

"I said wed, didn't I?" answered Arthur Augustus.

"Ha, ha! Yes!"

"You fellows stand wound and watch!" said Arthur Augustus, grinning. "Silverson is goin' to be wed—vewy wed—shortly. Ha, ha!"

"You benighted ass!" said Tom. "Are you really potty enough to think of squirting red paint over a beak in quad?"

"You don't catch on, deah boy!" explained Arthur Augustus patiently. "I am not goin' to let him have it in the chivvay! I do not want

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to be walked in to Wailton and whopped! I am goin' to wait heah till Silverson passes me—and then—ha, ha!"

"And then what?" gasped Tom.

"He is weahin' a light bwown coat—vewy light. As light as that gvey one you've got on. Fancy streaks of wed paint all down the back of his coat!"

"Oh crikey!"

"He will know nothin' about it, of course! He has no eyes in the back of his head. He is a vewy watchful beast, but he can't see behind him," grinned Arthur Augustus. "He will walk out with wed paint all over his back!"

And Gussy chuckled gleefully.

"I have got it in for that wottah!" he further explained. "He has been waggin' us in Form. He doesn't like Studay No. 6—especially me! Pwobably he knows that I wegard him with feahful scorn. He has given me a hundwed lines for nothin'. I am goin' to let him have wed paint all ovah the back of his coat in return! See!"

"But—"

"You see, I would not tweat any othah person in such a way! I am vewy well awah that the most feahful injuwy you can do a fellow is to damage his clobber," said Arthur Augustus. "Such a pwoceedin' is quite outside the limit, in ordinary circs. But Silverson is such a swab, such a wat, such a wottah, that I wegard him as deservin' it! And he is goin' to have it!"

Evidently Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was in deadly determination on the warpath. Plenty of fellows in the St. Jim's Fourth thought that Silverson deserved to be boiled in oil. Arthur Augustus thought that he even deserved to have his clobber decorated with red paint—which, of course, was still more severe!

"But you can't do it, old chap!" urged Tom. "Even if Silverson doesn't see you, anybody else might."

"Suppose Railton looked out of the window, just as you did it?" suggested Manners.

"Or the Head!" said Lowther. "Or suppose a prefect came along!"

"I shall have to wisk all that, of course," said Arthur Augustus serenely. "Nothin' wisk, nothin' win!"

"You'll be spotted!" urged Tom.

"Silverson will!" grinned Gussy. "Spotted—and stweaked, too! Ha, ha!"

Tom Merry cast an anxious glance towards the doorway of the House.

Mr. Silverson had not come out yet. The Terrible Three had noticed him as they came out, speaking to the master of the Shell within.

Tom hoped that Mr. Linton would keep him a little longer. He had not the slightest doubt that, if Gussy got on with this remarkable stunt for punishing Silverson, the eyes of authority would fall on him—even if Silverson's eyes did not, which was quite likely. Gussy was full of confidence—not at all shared by his friends! Gussy, in fact, had to be stopped somehow!

"Now look here, old chap—" said Tom Merry persuasively.

"It's all wight!" assured Arthur Augustus. "You fellows stand wound and watch. It will make you laugh like anythin' when Silverson walks out at the gates with wed paint spotted and stweaked all ovah the back of his ovahcoat."

Tom Merry, Manners, and Lowther exchanged glances. Really and truly, they could not let Gussy get on with this! It was too awfully dangerous!

"Come for a walk, Gussy!" said Tom.  
 "I am waitin' for Silvahson, deah boy, as I have told you."

"Much better take a little walk," urged Monty Lowther. "You don't always get such good company, old bean."

"Weally, Low(hah—"  
 "This way, old chap!" said Tom; and he slipped his arm through Gussy's on the right, while Lowther, grinning, slipped an arm through Gussy's left. "Much better come for a walk than wait for the Worm!"

"Bai Jove! Welease me at once, you uttah asses!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus in indignant wrath, jerking at his arms. "I ordah you to welease me at once! I wegard this as feahful cheek!"

"That's all right! Come on."

"I wefuse to come on!" roared Arthur Augustus. "If you do not welease me this vewy instant, I will knock your sillay heads togethah!"

"Oh, my hat!"

"Help!"

"Will you welease my arms?" shrieked Arthur Augustus, as he was walked, willy-nilly, away from the doorway of the School House by his two kind friends—Manners following on behind, chuckling.

The swell of St. Jim's struggled frantically. He tore his left arm free and gave Monty Lowther a shove in the ribs that made him stagger. Then with a terrific wrench he got his right arm away from Tom Merry, and gave him a push in the back that made him totter forward.

There was a sudden squirting sound as he did so!

Gussy had forgotten the loaded squirt in his right hand. That squirt squirted as he jammed his hand in Tom Merry's back and shoved.

A stream of red paint shot out, streaking over the back of Tom Merry's overcoat!

"Oh cwumbs!" gasped Arthur Augustus.

"You ass!"

"Collar him!"

"You uttah asses, you have made me empty that squirt!" howled Arthur Augustus. "The paint is all ovah your coat, Tom Mewwy, and I have none left for Silvahson!"

"What!" gasped Tom.

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Manners and Lowther.

Tom Merry had been determined to stop Gussy from red-painting Silvahson, for Gussy's own sake. He had been successful. Gussy had no paint left for the unpopular master of the Fourth. The squirt was empty. The paint was all over the back of Tom Merry's overcoat—bright red showing up to great advantage on the light grey material.

"Oh, blow you, you feahful ass!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus. "You have spoiled the whole thing. I shall have to get some more paint. I have to get it mixed vewy thin to go in a squirt, and—"

"You dangerous maniac!" gasped Tom. He dragged round the tail of his overcoat—smothered with thin but sticky paint. "You blithering chump!" He stared at the coat. "Look at that—"

"Wats!"

Arthur Augustus marched off in indignant wrath. He was going to get a fresh supply of paint for that squirt. But the probability was that Silvahson would be off the scene before Gussy was ready to get going again. It was fearfully annoying to Gussy.

"Look at my coat!" gasped Tom.  
 Manners and Lowther chortled. They seemed to see a comic side to the incident which was, for the moment, lost on Tom Merry.

"Well, you've stopped Gussy!" grinned Lowther. "You've got the paint instead of Silvahson."

"The howling ass!"

"You can't tret out like that, Tom!" chuckled Manners. "You'd better change that coat!"

Tom gave a snort! Leaving his comrades chuckling in the quad, he went back into the House to change his coat.

CALLED OVER THE COALS!

JAMES SILVERSON'S lip curled in an unpleasant, sardonic smile.

Mr. Linton frowned.

Both the masters saw Tom Merry as he came in and passed them, and both noticed the state of his overcoat.

They could hardly have failed to notice streaks and smears of bright red paint on a light grey coat.

Tom Merry was not in a state in which St. Jim's fellows were expected to appear in public.

It was nothing to do with Mr. Silvahson, who



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 FOR ALL GEM READERS  
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was master of the Fourth, but he was very careful to let his face express plainly his opinion of slovenliness in Shell fellows. His expression annoyed the master of the Shell, as it was intended to do.

"Merry!" rapped Mr. Linton.

Tom came to a halt and turned.

"Yes, sir!" he answered.

He looked at his Form-master, elaborately taking no notice whatever of James Silvahson. The man was his enemy, and Tom Merry ignored his existence as far as he could.

"What is the cause of this, Merry?" exclaimed Mr. Linton. "Why are your clothes in such a state?"

"An accident, sir—" said Tom.

"Oh! You have inadvertently rubbed against some wet paint?" said the master of the Shell. "You should be more careful, Merry. Your coat will require to be sent to the cleaner's before it can be worn again."

"Very well, sir!" said Tom.

He was willing to let it go at that. Certainly he would not have told Mr. Linton that he had inadvertently rubbed against wet paint, as he had not done so. But he saw no reason for entering into details—especially as he did not want to mention Gussy and his squirt.

But James' hard, unpleasant voice broke in. James saw a chance here, and he spoke as Tom was passing on.

"You are deceiving your Form-master, Merry!" said Mr. Silvahson.

Tom stopped again, turning a flaming face on him.

"That is untrue, Mr. Silverson!" he said, in a clear, distinct voice that reached a good many ears as well as Mr. Silverson's.

"Merry!" exclaimed Mr. Linton.

Tom's eyes flashed.

"That man has no right to say that I have deceived you, sir!" he exclaimed. "What he has said is untrue."

"You must not say anything of the kind, as you know very well, Merry!" snapped Mr. Linton. "Be silent! Mr. Silverson, will you please explain your remark?"

"Certainly, sir!" said James, with a venomous look at Tom. "Merry has told you—or, at least, allowed you to believe—that he has accidentally rubbed his overcoat on wet paint. He has done nothing of the kind."

"I did not say so!" snapped Tom.

Mr. Linton compressed his lips.

"I am not aware," said James, "that there is any wet paint of that colour about the school. If Merry says—"

"I have said that I did not say so!" exclaimed Tom. "It is no business of yours, in any case, Mr. Silverson."

"Silence!" snapped the master of the Shell. "How dare you address a member of Dr. Holmes' staff in such terms, Merry?"

Tom choked back angry words.

That unpleasant relation of his, James Silverson, had him at a disadvantage.

James had jumped at the chance of securing a temporary post in Tom Merry's school for one reason only; to further his scheme for ousting Tom in the favour of old Miss Priscilla Fawcett, on whose ample cash James had a covetous eye!

Tom Merry knew that, and his chums knew it; nevertheless, James was in the position of a master of the school, and had to be treated with respect.

It was not easy for Tom to treat a man with respect when he knew that he was a plotting and unscrupulous schemer.

"Now, Merry," said the master of the Shell acidly. "Tell me the truth—"

"I shall tell you the truth or nothing, sir," answered Tom. "And you know me well enough to know it."

"I warn you, Merry, not to be impertinent!" said Mr. Linton grimly. "You seem to have changed strangely this term; but if you imagine that you can indulge in reckless disrespect and defiance, you will very soon find out your mistake. You will take two hundred lines for giving me such an answer, and you will write them before you leave this House again. You are gated till the lines are done!"

Tom shut his lips hard.

"And now tell me how your overcoat came to be in that disgusting state?" snapped Mr. Linton.

"I have told you, sir, that it was an accident," answered Tom. "A fellow had some paint and it got on my coat entirely by accident and unintentionally. I was coming in to change it for that reason."

"You should have told me so."

"I should have told you so if you had asked me, sir."

"I should certainly inquire, sir, what Merry was doing with red paint," said Mr. Silverson. "It is not an article often found in the school, and I have no doubt whatever that some disrespectful prank was intended."

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That was James all over. Like many unscrupulous people, he was obtuse, and never knew when to stop. The master of the Shell was angry with Tom Merry, and James' amiable object was to make him angrier. He overlooked the fact that the master of the Shell, angry or not, was a just man and quite unlikely to be led into injustice by anger.

"Really, Mr. Silverson, you have heard Merry say that another boy had the paint," said Mr. Linton.

"Oh, if you believe him, sir—" said James, shrugging his shoulders.

"Certainly I do!" said Mr. Linton very sharply. "Merry, you may go to your study and write your lines."

"Very well, sir," said Tom.

And, leaving the painty coat hanging in the lobby, Tom Merry went up the staircase. Mr. Linton walked away to his study, cutting short his conversation with James Silverson.

The new master of the Fourth went out of the House. Perhaps it was fortunate for Arthur Augustus D'Arcy that he had not yet secured a new supply for his squirt. Anyhow, the swell of St. Jim's was not in the offing, and Mr. Silverson walked down to the gates, never dreaming how narrow an escape his overcoat had had.

## THE REBEL!

"TOM, you ass!"  
"Why the thump are you keeping us waiting, fathead?"

Manners and Lowther made those remarks together as they looked into Study No. 10 in the Shell.

Tom Merry was in the study, standing by the window, looking out, with dark, knitted brow.

He had been a quarter of an hour in the study, but he had made no move towards writing the lines for Linton.

He was not thinking of writing them. He was thinking of other things, as the angry expression on his face showed.

Manners and Lowther, having waited in vain for him to rejoin them in the quad, had come in to look for him.

It was a half-holiday that afternoon, and the three had intended to go across to Wayland to see a football match there. Plenty of other fellows were going, and it was more than time to start.

Tom looked round from the window.

"I can't come, according to Linton," he said.

"Well, you might have said so!" said Lowther, staring at him.

"Oh, I couldn't!" said Tom. "I mustn't leave the House again till I've written my lines."

"Lines! What lines?"

"Two hundred for Linton—or, rather, for Silverson!" said Tom bitterly. "That rat has landed me in another row!"

"But I don't see how he could," said Manners. "What on earth happened, then, the minute you got out of our sight?"

Tom explained, his chums listening with worried faces.

"That cur had to butt in!" said Tom. "He never loses a chance! If he can work it I'm going to have trouble all the time—till he gets me landed for keeps! He's got me into rows with Railton and Linton already more than once; now he's jumped at another chance!"

"You're such an ass, old chap!" said Manners.

"He couldn't have done anything if you hadn't let him draw you. But if you let yourself be diddled into cheeking Linton, what can you expect?"

"So it's my fault?" snapped Tom.

"Don't be an ass!" said Manners quietly. "It's your fault that you let your temper get the upper hand. It's natural enough, but it doesn't pay."

"Am I going to let that rat call me a liar?"

"You've got to remember that that rat is on the staff here, and that you can't tell him what you think of him."

"That's sense, Tom, old man," said Lowther. "We've got to stand the brute so long as he's here. It's simply potty to fall into the trap and give him a chance at you."

"I know—I know all that. But I'm fed-up!" exclaimed Tom passionately. "I never had any trouble with Linton, or Raiton, either, before that cad came to St. Jim's! They ought to think of that, and understand what it means. Linton told me to tell him the truth. He would never have said such a thing last term. I'm not standing much more of it!"

"Well, this washes out Wayland," said Lowther. "We're not going if you're not. Better have a cut at the lines."

"I'm fed-up with lines!" answered Tom. "Last week I had five hundred from Raiton—all through that rat! Now he's landed me with two hundred from Linton! I'm not sticking in for a half-holiday writing lines as I did last week! I'm going over to Wayland!"

"Tom, old chap—"

"You can 'Tom, old chap,' me till you're black in the face!" said Tom Merry determinedly. "I've done nothing to be gated for, and I'm not going to be gated on a half-holiday for nothing! I'll do the lines for Linton some time or other, but I'm going out this afternoon!"

His chums looked at him in dismay.

They could quite understand his feelings and sympathise with him. But his Form-master had ordered him to write the lines before he left the House. James Silverson had pulled the strings, no doubt; but that did not alter the fact that a fellow at school had to toe the line.

"Don't be an ass, Tom!" said Manners. "If you get into a fearful row with Linton it will simply be playing Silverson's game for him. That's exactly what he wants."

"He can have what he wants, then, if Linton finds out!" retorted Tom. "Linton shouldn't let that scheming cur pull his leg if he wants his orders obeyed."

"We'll all have an afternoon in," said Manners. "I've got some films I want to go over, and Monty can do his stuff for the 'Weekly.' We'll stick in the study while you do your lines."

"You can stick in the study, if you like," said Tom, "but I'm going over to Wayland!"

"You can't!"

"I can—and shall!"

"You're going to help Silverson make out that you're a rebellious, mutinous fellow, snapping your fingers at every kind of authority?" asked Manners sarcastically.

"He can make out what he likes!"

"For goodness' sake, Tom—" urged Lowther.

Tom set his lips.

"I'm going!" he said. "You fellows can please yourselves. Perhaps you'd better steer clear of me, as there may be a row."

"Don't talk rot!" snapped Lowther. "If you're going, we're coming!"

"You two can go out and wait for me," said Tom. "I shall have to get out without being seen, of course. But I'm going!"

"You're an ass, Tom!"

"Very likely. I'm going, all the same! Silverson's not going to gate me! He's not my beak!"

"You're an unreasonable ass, Tom!" said Manners.

"All right! Speech may be taken as read! You fellows wait for me in the lane—if you want the company of a rebellious, mutinous fellow who snaps his fingers at every kind of authority!" said Tom bitterly.

"You shouldn't do it, Tom—sneaking out of a back window like Racke or Crooke, or Cutts of the Fifth—"

"Are you advising me to walk out of gates under Linton's nose?" asked Tom sarcastically.

"Oh, don't be a goat! You're playing into that rat's hands!"

"I've heard all that! Give us a rest!"

Harry Manners breathed rather hard.

"All right! We'll wait in the lane, then!" he said curtly; and he turned and walked out of the study.

"I wish you'd chuck it, Tom," said Lowther, pausing before he followed. "Old Linton's a decent sort in his way, and I don't like the idea of cheeking him."

"It's Silverson who's gated me, not Linton. Linton's only had his silly leg pulled," answered Tom.

"Oh, rot!"

Monty Lowther followed Manners. Evidently argument was wasted on Tom Merry in his present mood.

The two Shell fellows went down the stairs and out of the House. Tom was left in the study.

He did not remain there. Mr. Linton had not specified any time by which his lines had to be handed in; he had said that Tom was to write them before he left the House. They could be done later—after he had come back from seeing the match at Wayland.

It was not, after all, likely that his absence would be noted. Linton certainly would not guess that his order was being recklessly disregarded; and he was not, like Silverson, a man to suspect and watch a fellow. So long as Tom got clear unseen, it was likely to be all right.

Tom, however, hesitated a few minutes before he left the study. It was, as he had said, Silverson who had caused his "gating." For that reason he was not going to be gated, but was going to carry on as he had arranged for the afternoon.

Still, the order came from his own Form-master; if trouble accrued, it would not be to James Silverson, but to Mr. Linton, that he would have to answer.

But his hesitation did not last long. He went along to the study landing, glanced about him, and ascended the dormitory stairs. Fellows were not allowed to go up to the dormitories in the day-time without leave asked, but that was another order that he had to disregard in his new career as a rebel. It was a cold and misty October day, and he had to have a coat—and his overcoat was in the lobby downstairs—not that he wanted it in its present red-paint state. In the dormitory, he sorted out a raincoat, tucked it under his arm, and went down again.

Luckily, he was not observed. He hurried up the Shell passage. In that passage was a box-

room, the window of which looked out at the back of the building. And in another minute or two, Tom was turning the door-handle of the box-room.

### FIGGINS & CO. ON THE WARPATH!

"ROT!" said Figgins.  
"Bosh!" said Kerr.  
"Now, look here—" urged Fatty Wynn.

George Figgins, the great chief of the New House juniors at St. Jim's, gave a snort. Kerr shook his head.

"Does that chap ever think of anything but grub?" asked Figgins. "Here we are, going over to Wayland to see a football match—and he stops us and talks about grub!"

"Talk about it while we walk over to Wayland, Fatty," suggested Kerr. "That suit you?"

"I'm not thinking of the grub," said Fatty Wynn, with dignity. "I mean, not specially of the grub. Of course, I like cake—I don't deny it!"

"Not much good if you did!" agreed Figgins. "I'd take your word on any other subject, Fatty—but not if you said you didn't like cake."

"It's a scrumptious cake!" said Fatty, his eyes glistening. "You know Dame Taggles' big cakes, with marzipan on top!"

"Blow the cake!" said Figgins.

"And blow the marzipan!" said Kerr.

There seemed to be a plentiful lack of enthusiasm on the part of Fatty's pals, in spite of the scrumptiousness of the cake!

"I saw D'Arcy take it into his House," went on Fatty Wynn, unheeding. "They can't be going to scoff it till tea-time. Think of their faces when they came in and found it gone."

"Time we started!" said Figgins. "Come on."

"We haven't dished the School House for weeks," pleaded Fatty Wynn, "and they'll be forgetting that the New House is Cook House at St. Jim's at this rate. Study No. 6 are all gone—I saw Blake, Herries, and Digby marching Gussy off—he was jawing them, but he went—"

"Time we went, too!" said Kerr.

"That cake," said Fatty Wynn, "is parked in Study No. 6 in the School House. Are we going to waste a chance like this? Think of the proverb—wilful waste makes woeful want!"

Figgins and Kerr chuckled.

"And the cream of the joke would be to ask them over to the New House to tea to have some of their own cake!" urged Fatty Wynn. "Think of their faces."

"Oh!" said Figgins. Figgy seemed rather to like that idea.

"We'll whack out the cake with them—their own cake!" urged Fatty. "No end of a joke on those School House sweeps!"

"But how the dickens are you going to raid the School House?" demanded Kerr. "Too many fellows about for us to be able to get up to a School House study and walk off with a cake. It was all very well that time we used the secret passage—but that's screwed up now, since they spotted it. We shouldn't get Gussy's cake—we should get bagged and ragged."

"Nothing in it," said Figgins. "Forget it, Fatty."

"I know how!" declared Fatty Wynn.

"Well, how?" asked Figgins. "If there's anything in it, it would be rather a jest on those

School House swabs. But we can't walk into their House and walk off with a cake."

"Follow me!" said Fatty.

"But look here—"

"I tell you I know how!" said David Llewellyn Wynn, "and I'll jolly well show you if you're not too jolly lazy to walk round the House."

"Oh, all right!" sighed Figgins.

Fatty Wynn led the way, and his two comrades followed him.

All three of them were keen enough on a raid on the rival House—if practicable. Fatty's chums admitted that it was rather a stunt to ask Blake & Co. to tea in the New House, with their own cake to grace the tea-table.

But getting into the House unseen and unsuspected was essential, but difficult. Figgins and Kerr did not see how it was to be done.

Fatty, it seemed, did—if the prospect of getting hold of the cake had not led him to underrate the difficulties.

They stopped at last behind the School House, where an iron rain-pipe was clamped to the wall at an angle of the building.

It was an old, thick rain-pipe, strongly clamped to the bricks. Its ascent was easy enough to an active fellow.

Twenty feet or more up, it passed close by a small back window with a broad stone sill.

"That's it!" said Fatty triumphantly.

"Up that pipe!" ejaculated Figgins.

"Just that!"

"Well, you ass—" began George Figgins. But he paused, as, glancing up, he noted that the little high window was open. "Oh!" he added. "I see!"

"That's the Shell box-room!" said Fatty. "I've been doing some scouting since I thought of getting after Gussy's cake, and I noticed that that window was open, see? Of course, it will be shut to-night—but it's open now, and it's as easy as winking to climb in."

"And when we're in, we shall be in a box-room," said Figgins. "That's a good step from Study No. 6 in the Fourth."

"We shall have to find a minute when the coast is clear, of course," said Fatty Wynn. "But lots of the fellows will be out on a half-holiday—and most of the others will be downstairs."

"That's so," admitted Figgins. "Fellows don't stick up in the studies on a half-holiday as a rule. Still, there will be some of them about—and if even one of them spots us, we're done. Just one yell, and there would be a crowd on the spot before you could say 'billy-oh!'"

"We've got to be careful," said Fatty. "I know that."

"Jolly risky," said Kerr.

"I like that from you!" said Fatty warmly.

"Do Scotsmen ever show funk?"

"Never!" grinned Kerr. "I'm on."

"Mind, I'm not thinking chiefly of the cake!" said Fatty. "Don't you fellows run away with that idea. Still, it's got a marzipan top, remember! But think of dishing those School House swabs, you know! I suppose we've got to keep the School House in its place this term!"

"We have—we has!" agreed Figgins.

"They'll be getting their ears up if we don't down them every now and then!" argued Fatty Wynn. "That's what I'm thinking of—not the cake! But it's a scrumptious cake!" he added, with glistening eyes. "Marzipan on top, and full of plums, and—"

"We'll guess the rest!" said Figgins. "It will



be calling-over before you've finished, at this rate! Come on!"

The raid having been decided on, Figgins & Co. lost no time. George Figgins started swarming up that rain-pipe.

It was none too clean. It did not improve his clothes. But clothes were a secondary consideration in carrying on the unending warfare between the rival Houses of St. Jim's.

After Figgins went Kerr, and after Kerr, the plump Fatty.

The spot, fortunately, was not overlooked by other windows; and really, the box-room window being open, it looked like a safe venture—at least, until the New House raiders got in.

After that, being in the enemy's territory, it behoved them to be very wary indeed.

Figgins was hardly more than a minute clambering to the window. He peered in, and discerned a number of empty boxes and trunks—nothing more. Few fellows, in fact, were likely to come up to a box-room on a half-holiday. Figgins clambered actively in.

Kerr followed him in. Fatty Wynn was rather longer negotiating the rain-pipe, but he got in at the window at last, gasping for breath.

"Well, here we are!" remarked Figgins. "Safe as houses so far—but it will be a different tune when we go out of this room!"

"The cake's worth the risk!" said Fatty. "I mean, it's worth a spot of risk to dish the School House."

Figgins chuckled.

"Come on, then!" he said. "Mind, if a single fellow spots us, we're done for, so be jolly careful!"

He stepped quietly to the door of the box-room. It opened on an alcove at the end of the Shell study passage. Opening it, Figgy peered out and listened.

He closed it again, suddenly but softly.

"Quiet!" he breathed.

"What—"

"Somebody's coming up the passage."

"Oh, my hat!"

The three listened anxiously. Footsteps could be heard coming up the Shell passage. If it was somebody coming to the box-room, contrary to all expectation, it was bad luck for Figgins & Co. They were going to be discovered in the rival House at the very outset.

"Only one chap," whispered Kerr, listening intently.

"Fat lot that matters!" grunted Figgins. "He's only got to let out one howl to bring a whole army here."

"Not if we keep him quiet."

"Oh!" Figgins caught on at once. "By gum! Look here! Collar him as soon as he steps in! We can keep him quiet all right. Stuff a box-ropo into his mouth or something—what?"

"Good egg!" agreed Fatty Wynn.

They waited and listened. If that unseen fellow was not coming to the box-room it was all right; but if he was, Figgins & Co. were not going to let him give the alarm, if they could help it. Retreat from the box-room down the rain-pipe was slow work. They would be colared, captured, and undoubtedly ragged to the wide as a punishment for their cheek in invading the School House. That fellow, if he came into the box-room, had to be kept quiet.

And he was coming.

They heard the footsteps turn off the passage into the alcove where the door was. And the three parked themselves behind the door, to be

hidden by it when it opened, ready to pounce on that School House man as soon as he was inside, and keep him quiet.

### BAGGED IN THE BOX-ROOM!

**T**OM MERRY had the surprise of his life the next moment.

He turned the door-handle of the Shell box-room, and walked in. Tom was thinking, with a knitted brow, of his own affairs, and certainly not thinking of House raids, or anything of the kind. But had he been thinking of them, he certainly would never have dreamed of finding the New House enemy in a box-room in the School House.

He walked into the room and shut the door after him, and three figures, revealed by the closing of the door, leaped into instant activity.

Before he knew what was happening, before he realised that anybody was there, Tom Merry was down on the floor, with Kerr pinning both

## DON'T FORGET YOUR "HOLIDAY ANNUAL"!

his wrists, Fatty Wynn grasping him round the neck, and George Figgins clutching his mouth with a heavy hand to keep it shut.

Never had a fellow been so utterly surprised.

Tom's eyes fairly bulged from his face as he wriggled in the grasp of three sudden and unsuspected foes.

"Got him!" breathed Kerr.

"Keep him quiet!" gasped Fatty.

"What-ho!" said Figgins.

"Ooooooogh!" came a faint gasp from the captain of the Shell.

But Tom was able to utter no word. Still less was he able to utter a shout to call a crowd of School House fellows to the rescue. Only that one faint gasp came from under Figgy's clutching hand.

Figgins grinned down cheerily at his startled and astonished face.

"All serene, old boy!" he whispered gleefully.

"We're not going to damage you, Tommy. Wouldn't hurt a hair of your jolly old head, not for its weight in gold. Just keeping you quiet."

"We don't want your pals here—see?" grinned Kerr.

"We haven't called for company, you know," chuckled Fatty Wynn. "Just a little informal call—no ceremony, old chap."

Tom Merry struggled. Finding himself in the grasp of the New House enemy, in that utterly unexpected quarter, he forgot other matters, and put his beef into a strenuous resistance. Figgins & Co. were raiding the School House, and Tom Merry was going to stop them, if he could.

But he couldn't. For two or three minutes he kept the New House trio busy. But he could not break away, and he could not get his mouth free to utter a shout. Figgins & Co. had him, and they kept him.

He sank back at last, spent and breathless. Then Figgins, taking his hand from the School House junior's mouth, stuffed in a handkerchief.

"Sorry, old bean!" he grinned. "I should enjoy your conversation any other time, but just at present silence is golden, you know."

Tom Merry wriggled breathlessly, and glared up at his captors. But he could not utter a sound now, not even a gasp.

"Hard cheese, old chap!" said Kerr. "But these things happen in war, you know. What the dickens did you come barging in for? You've asked for this, you know."

"I saw your pals going out," said Fatty Wynn. "Why didn't you go with them? I suppose you didn't sneak into this box-room to smoke like Racke?"

Tom Merry could not answer.

He had come to that box-room, to slither down the rain-pipe, by which Figgins & Co. had ascended, and leave the House unseen. But he was quite unable to carry out that intention now. He was extended on the box-room floor, in the grasp of three pairs of hands—fairly in the hands of the Amalekites!

"Well, we've got him all right," said Figgins. "We shall have to keep him quiet here while we trickle along to Study No. 6. Mind if we put a spot of box-rope round you, Tommy?"

Tom could only glare.

"All in the day's work, old thing," said Kerr. "Keep him quiet while I get a rope off one of these boxes. Lots about."

Tom made another effort as Kerr went in quest of a box-rope. But Figgins and Fatty Wynn held him securely.

A box-rope was easily obtained. Kerr, grinning, knotted one end round Tom's wrists, and then his ankles, fastening them together. The other end was knotted to a big box. Then the captain of the Shell was allowed to sit up on the floor, leaning against the box.

"Comfy?" asked Figgins considerably. "We'll do all we can for you, Tommy. Give him that raincoat to sit on. Blessed if I know what he's lugged a raincoat here for; but he can sit on it!"

Kerr folded the raincoat for Tom to sit on. It was really kind and considerate, but the captain of the Shell did not look grateful. He glared.

"Smile!" said Figgins encouragingly. "We shan't be long, and we shall come back this way and let you loose. Must keep you out of mischief while we're busy in your House. You see that?"

"Come on!" said Kerr. "He's all right till we get back. Shan't keep you more than a quarter of an hour, most likely, Tom."

Leaving Tom such comfort as that afforded, the New House trio went to the box-room door. Figgins opened it again, peered out and listened.

Then he stepped out into the alcove, put his head out into the passage, and glanced along it. No one was to be seen.

"O.K.!" said Figgy, in a whisper. "Come on!"

His comrades followed him, and Kerr shut the door after them. They disappeared from Tom Merry's view. Tom heard the key turn in the lock.

Tom sat where he was on the folded raincoat, leaning on the box. There was nothing else he could do. He was not feeling happy; but this sort of thing was part and parcel of the warfare between the rival Houses of St. Jim's, and he had to make the best of it.

He hoped that whatever it was that the invaders were up to in the School House, they would not be very long about it.

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It was quite unlikely that any fellow would come up to the box-room on a half-holiday. And, anyhow, Kerr had locked the door on the outside, and taken away the key. There was no prospect of release for Tom till the New House raiders came back.

It was the fortune of war. But he was thinking of Manners and Lowther, waiting for him to join them in Rylcombe Lane, and of his determination to go over to Wayland for the football match, in spite of the "gating."

He waited impatiently for the return of the raiders. Kerr had said that they would be back in a quarter of an hour. Tom was unable to see the time; but at the end of a quarter of an hour, and another quarter, there was no sign or sound of the New House Co.

They were taking their time about it.

But long minute followed long minute, and Tom began to wonder whether they were coming back at all.

They might have been spotted and chased down the staircase, or they might have dodged into some corner to escape being spotted. He could not guess what had happened. But they did not come back.

The long, long minutes lengthened, and there was no sound of a footstep, and the door did not open. And Tom Merry, with deep feelings that grew deeper and deeper, could only wait. And he could not help reflecting that he might as well have been sitting in his study writing the lines for Linton, as sitting on the floor of the box-room waiting for Figgins & Co.

#### SNAFFLED IN THE STUDY!

**R**ALPH RECKNESS CARDEW, of the St. Jim's Fourth, stared—and then he grinned. Stepping out of his study, No. 9 in the Fourth, Cardew had a glimpse of a long leg disappearing into Study No. 6.

There was nobody in the passage.

There had evidently been somebody just before Cardew opened his study door. That somebody had vanished into Blake's study.

Cardew fancied that he knew whose long leg that was.

It did not belong to one of the four juniors who occupied Study No. 6—he knew that. Besides, he knew that Blake, Herries, Digby, and D'Arcy had gone over to Wayland that afternoon for the football match. His study-mates, Levison and Clive, had gone with them.

Cardew had not gone with his friends, partly because he was too slack, and partly because he had other business on hand that afternoon—having a sporting friend to see at the Green Man in Rylcombe Lane.

So he had been loafing in his study, smoking a cigarette, after Levison and Clive were off the scene, till he was ready to start for Rylcombe.

Now, however, as he stood looking down the Fourth Form passage in the School House, he forgot for the moment his own plans for the afternoon.

Unless he was mistaken, that long leg which had disappeared into Study No. 6 belonged to George Figgins of the New House.

How a New House man could have got into the House, and reached the studies upstairs without being spotted, he did not know; but he was almost sure that it was Figgins—and if it was Figgins, this meant a House raid while Blake & Co. were absent.

Cardew stepped softly along the passage and paused at the door of Study No. 6. That door had closed without a sound.

But he heard a cautious whisper from within:

"All serene now!"

Cardew winked at the oaken door. It was Figgy's voice—but it was not, Cardew fancied, quite so serene as Figgy thought it was!

"O.K.!" came Kerr's whisper. "So far, at any rate. We may run into a mob of them getting away, though."

"That's all right, if we've got the cake." It was Fatty Wynn's whisper. "We can rush them all right if they try to stop us. It's all right if we've got the cake."

"Buck up—no need to waste time!"

"I expect it's in the cupboard."

Cardew heard the sound of an opening cupboard.

Figgins & Co.—the three of them—were in Study No. 6. Cardew, outside the door, grinned.

He heard a dismayed exclamation.

"It isn't here!"

Fatty Wynn was less cautious in his sudden dismay. His voice was not a whisper now.

"Not there!" exclaimed Figgins.

"No! Not in the cupboard!"

"Well, you ass! Have you brought us here for nothing?" breathed Kerr.

"Well, it ought to be here. I tell you I saw D'Arcy bringing it in. They can't have scoffed it. Stands to reason it was for tea. They're not greedy pigs like Baggy Trimble, scoffing cake just after dinner."

Cardew suppressed a chuckle.

He knew what had happened to that cake, if Figgins & Co. did not!

That cake had been cut into six wedges, to be parked in six pockets, for refreshment at Wayland Football Ground, for Blake, Herries, Digby, D'Arcy, Levison, and Clive! That had not occurred to Fatty Wynn. He had banked with absolute certainty on the cake being in Study No. 6 for tea.

"Well, my hat!" ejaculated Figgins. "Then we've come here for nothing."

"What a sell!" groaned Fatty Wynn.

"You fat chump!" said Kerr.

"Well, I jolly well know——"

"Never mind!" said Figgins. "We're here—and we'll leave our trade mark, just to amuse those School House sweeps when they come in! We'll leave them our kind regards—written in ink round the walls, what?"

"I'd rather have had the cake!" moaned Fatty Wynn.

"Oh, blow the cake!"

"It had marzipan on top——"

"Blow the marzipan!"



Figgins lost no time in swarming up the rain-pipe. It did not improve his clothes, but clothes were a secondary consideration in carrying on the warfare between the rival Houses of St. Jim's!

"And packed with plums!"

"Blow the plums!"

"Better not stay here jawing!" remarked Kerr.

"No," agreed Figgins. "Time's precious. We— Oh, great pip!"

Figgins broke off as the study door was pushed open—only a few inches.

A hand whipped round the edge of the door and extracted the key from the inside of the lock.

Instantly the door closed again.

Kerr made a bound—he knew what was coming. But he was not in time. A click sounded outside!

The next moment Kerr was dragging at the door handle. But he was too late. The study door was locked on the outside.

"Oh!" gasped Kerr.

"Who—who—who's that?" gasped Figgins. "I—I say, has he locked the door on us?"

"Yes!"

"Oh crumbs!"

"Some School House swab!" stuttered Fatty Wynn. "We must have been spotted coming here, after all!"

"Exactly!" came Cardew's cool drawl through the keyhole. "Spotted and potted, my fat friend!"

"That's that slacking ass Cardew!" growled Figgins. "Might have known he'd be frowning about the studies."

"Quite!" chuckled Cardew.

"Let us out of this, you sweep!" snapped Figgins.

"Don't you want to see Blake when he comes in?" asked Cardew.

"Blake? No! What do you mean?"

"He's quite a nice chap, and I'm sure he will be pleased to see you in his study. I'm going to leave this key with old Taggles, to give to Blake when he comes in!"

"Oh!" gasped Figgins.

"Ta-ta!" drawled Cardew. And he slipped the study key into his pocket and walked down the passage to the landing.

"Oh, holy smoke!" gasped Figgins. "This is a go!"

"It is—it are!" agreed Kerr.

"And we've not even got the cake!" groaned Fatty Wynn. "We're locked in this beastly study till those School House swabs come in—and we haven't even got the cake!"

Figgins gave him a glare.

"You and your cake!" he snorted. "You've landed us in a precious pickle, you fat ass! You say cake again, and I'll chuck the inkpot over you!"

Figgins & Co. gave one another dismayed looks.

Cardew had coolly locked them in and walked off with the key. They had to wait in that study till the School House fellows came back from Wayland. And then—

It was not a happy prospect!

"Well, we're done!" said Kerr. "Tom Merry's done, too, if that's any comfort! He's got to stick in that box-room so long as we stick in this study."

"Bother him!" grunted Figgins. "How are we going to get out?"

"No how! We can't get out!"

"That blithering ass Fatty—"

"By gum! It isn't so bad, you fellows!" exclaimed Fatty Wynn. He was looking into the

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study cupboard again. "I say, I've found some toffee—"

"What?" yelled Figgins.

"Toffee!"

"Toffee!" hissed Figgins. "We're bagged in this study, like Tom Merry in the box-room, and you talk about toffee! Bump him!"

"Look here— Yaroooh!" roared Fatty Wynn, as his two exasperated comrades collared him and bumped him on the floor of Study No. 6. "I say— Yarooop!"

"There!" gasped Figgins. "Now you say toffee again!"

"Oooooooooogh!"

Fatty Wynn sat up and spluttered. It was some time before he was able to find comfort in the toffee he had so happily discovered. There was no comfort at all for Figgins and Kerr—they raged rather like tigers in a cage.

But there was no help for it. Tom Merry had been bagged in the box-room; Figgins & Co. had been snaffled in the study—and there was no help for either!

### HE COMETH NOT!

"**B**LOW!" said Monty Lowther.

"What the thump is keeping him?" grunted Manners.

"Changed his mind, perhaps!"

"I hope so! But if he had, he wouldn't keep us waiting here—he would get some fellow to cut out and tell us."

Manners and Lowther were getting impatient.

They were waiting for Tom Merry to join them in Rylcombe Lane at a little distance from the school. They had expected to have to wait ten minutes or a quarter of an hour. But more than half an hour had now passed, and Tom Merry had not materialised.

A fellow who was gated had to be careful getting out of the school unseen, and could not rush matters. They understood that, and they supposed that Tom had not found the coast clear, and was looking for a safe opportunity for getting out of the school.

But it was weary waiting. They strolled aimlessly about the lane, and looked continually towards St. Jim's—in vain.

"We shall lose the first half at this rate!" grunted Lowther. "Not much good going over to Wayland at all, that I can see."

"Oh, bother the football match!" said Manners. "I'd rather chuck it up, if Tom would have sense enough to stay in. But—"

"Well, he can't be staying in and leaving us hanging about here for nothing!" said Lowther. "I suppose he's found some trouble in getting out—Linton may have an eye open, or something. It can't be Silverson; he went out before we did—"

"Here comes somebody!"

"Only that slacking ass Cardew!"

Ralph Reckness Cardew came strolling down the lane from the school, with his hands in the pockets of a light fawn raincoat. Manners and Lowther eyed him rather sourly. They did not think much of the dandy of the Fourth—and they were in a disgruntled mood.

But Cardew gave them a cheery nod as he came up and stopped.

"Seen anything of the Worm?" he asked.

"Your beak, do you mean? No—he's gone out, that's all I know about the rat!" grunted Manners.

"You haven't seen him this way?"

"Haven't seen him at all since he went out of the House, and haven't thought about him, either."

"You don't know whether he's in Rylcombe?"

"No; and don't want to!"

"I want to!" smiled Cardew.

"Anxious for his company?" asked Lowther sarcastically.

"Not at all! But our beak," said Cardew, "has an overpowerin' sense of duty. It's quite overwhelmin'. Not only does he make life not worth livin' in his own Form, but he takes some work off the hands of other beaks—especially Linton's. He seems to have a special down on your pal Tom Merry—ever noticed it?"

"Yes, ass!"

"And I've heard," drawled Cardew, "that he's been known to keep an eye on the Green Man at Rylcombe on a half-holiday, thinkin' that Tom Merry might be spotted there—not sharin' the general high opinion of Thomas."

"We've spotted him watching that pub, if that's what you mean!" snapped Manners. "He's such a rotter himself that he can't understand any fellow being decent."

"I shouldn't like him to make a catch!" said Cardew.

"You silly ass," snorted Lowther, "are you such a fool as Silverson to fancy that Tom Merry would be found dead at that pub?"

"Not at all! I know Thomas' high principles too well!" smiled Cardew. "I know them, and envy them, and strive in vain to imitate them."

"Oh, shut up, you gassing ass!" said Manners. "If that rat is nosing round the Green Man with an eye open for Tom, he's welcome to get on with it."

"Quite! But he might make a wrong catch," explained Cardew. "If he's nosin' about he won't catch Tom Merry playin' the giddy ox—but he might catch somebody else, which would be much more serious—I mean, if the somebody else was my poor little self."

"So that's where you're going?" said Manners contemptuously.

"Guilty, my lord!"

"Don't tell us about it, then—push on, and let's see the last of you!"

"Do I bore you as much as you bore me?" asked Cardew. "Sorry—I must be a frightful bore, if I do! But I'm rather anxious to know whether Silverson is doing his sentry-go stunt again. He's welcome to spot Tom Merry, or all the Shell, School House and New House—but I should hate to have him spot me."

"Keep clear of the place then, you ass!" said Monty Lowther. "That's good advice, if you want it."

"No use for it!" sighed Cardew. "Try me with bad advice, and I'll see what I can do for you."

"Oh, don't be a goat!"

"Goats are like poets—born, not made! I can't help playin' the goat, any more than you can help makin' people weep with your chestnuts, old chap—or Manners disfigurin' the walls of his study with mouldy photographs! We are as we are!" signed Cardew. "Well, I'll push on."

"Look here, Cardew, you dummy!" said Manners. "You can't help being a dingy sort of tick—"

"Thanks!"

"But you can help getting sacked! It's quite likely that Silverson is doing some of his spying. Keep clear of the Green Man, if you've got a little sense!"

"I've got a little—but such a very little!" smiled Cardew. "Still, I'm takin' some precautions, the Worm bein' so very wary these days. When I draw near the forbidden precincts, my school cap goes into my pocket, and I've got a big cloth cap to shove on that will hide half my face."

"Fat lot of good—in that nobby raincoat!" said Lowther. "Your clothes are known a mile off, all over the school."

Cardew laughed.

"Yes; that's what comes of havin' a good tailor," he admitted. "You fellows might be taken for tramps—I never could be! But this nobby raincoat will disappear also before I get to the Green Man, my beloved 'erars! I've got an overcoat on underneath it, see?"

"What difference will that make?"

Cardew chuckled.

"It isn't my own coat," he explained. "It's the dirtiest, slovenliest overcoat I could find in the lobby when I came out. Nobody would ever suspect me of wearin' such a coat! I shall put it on outside the raincoat later on. See?"

And Cardew, laughing, gave the Shell fellows a nod and walked on. Manners and Lowther stared after him.

"Well, the cheeky ass!" said Manners. "He's borrowed some other man's coat—Trimble's, I suppose, from his description of it."

"Might land Trimble in trouble if he has, and if he's seen!" said Monty Lowther.

"Well, a fellow can prove where he was, I suppose, if he was up for going to the Green Man!" said Manners. "It would come out that the coat had been borrowed. Nobody would know who had borrowed it."

"Like his cheek, all the same!"

"Well, he's a cheeky ass! Is Tom Merry never coming?" growled Manners. "Look here, if Linton's spotted him, and stopped him, it's not much use our waiting here."

"Not much use going in, either, if he's on his way—and very likely he is!" grunted Lowther. "We don't want to miss him."

"Oh, bother!"

"Blow!"

They waited. Cardew disappeared up the lane. Three or four more fellows came along from the school—but Tom Merry was not among them. The minutes passed as slowly to the two juniors waiting in Rylcombe Lane as to their chum waiting in the Shell box-room in the School House.

"Oh, my hat!" murmured Manners suddenly. "Here comes the Worm!"

Mr. Silverson came round a bend of the lane from the direction of Rylcombe.

Evidently the master of the Fourth had been to the village, though whether nosing about the Green Man or not, they did not know. As he knew that Tom Merry had been gated by his Form-master, he could hardly have expected to spot Tom. On the other hand, it was possible that he had calculated on the indignant junior giving way to his temper, and disregarding his Form-master's order—exactly, in fact, what Tom had done!

If that was the case, he had had his trouble for his pains. His malicious suspicion of Tom was quite unfounded; had Tom Merry come out,

he certainly would not have gone anywhere near the Green Man.

But James, who judged others by himself, did not know that.

Silverson glanced sourly at the two Shell fellows as he passed them. They had been in his sight for two or three minutes before they noticed him, as they had been looking towards the school.

That they were loitering about, waiting for somebody, James could see at a glance—and he fancied that he could guess for whom they were waiting.

He walked on and disappeared in at the school gates—leaving Manners and Lowther still kicking their heels wearily in Rylcombe Lane.

### JAMES IN LUCK !

**J**AMES SILVERSON'S face was thoughtful as he walked across the quadrangle to the School House.

The schemer of St. Jim's was not feeling pleased.

More than once, in his peculiar campaign against Tom Merry, Tom had played into his hands, and the amiable James had rather expected that that was going to happen again.

He had seen nothing of Tom Merry in Rylcombe; but he had walked back to the school thinking it very probable that the captain of the Shell had disregarded his gating and joined his chums for the afternoon's excursion, on which they had been about to start when the red-paint incident had occurred.

But the sight of Manners and Lowther hanging about in the lane rather dispelled that idea.

He guessed that they were waiting for Tom, but if they were waiting for him, that was as good as proof that Tom had not left the school.

On the other hand, if they were merely waiting till Tom got through his lines and handed them in to Linton, why should they wait in the lane instead of in the quad?

That looked as if there was something secret about it—as if, in fact, Tom Merry was going out—but not openly, as his friends had done.

If that was the case, he was a very long time about it; he had had almost time by now to get through those two hundred lines.

James went into the School House, and, after pausing a minute or two, went up the staircase.

He was going to glance into Tom Merry's study and ascertain whether he actually was writing those lines.

As master of the Fourth, he had no business in the Shell studies, and Tom was very likely to tell him so when he put his head in—if he was there. Still, he had a pretext.

He was related to Tom, and he was in regular correspondence with old Miss Priscilla Fawcett, Tom's guardian. It was easy enough to invent a message from old Miss Fawcett to account for his visit to Study No. 10 in the Shell—if he found Tom there.

James walked up the Shell passage from the study landing. He found the door of Study No. 10 half-open—as Tom had left it when he left the study.

One glance was enough for James.

Tom was not there.

James walked away slowly, still thinking. It was possible that by putting on speed Tom had scrambled through those two hundred lines and gone down to Linton's study with them—in which case, the gating was over, and he was free to

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spend the remainder of the half-holiday as he chose; and in which case, also, James Silverson had no further chance of making himself obnoxious.

But two hundred lines of Latin was a fairly heavy task; he must have put on a lot of speed if he had got through.

James was going to make sure.

Downstairs, he looked into the lobby. If he had gone out, his lines undone, it was most likely that he had taken his coat, and his delay in joining his waiting chums might be accounted for by the time spent in cleaning off the paint before he went.

The lobby was deserted, and there were few coats left hanging. Among them James looked for Tom Merry's.

It was gone.

That light grey overcoat was quite well known to James. There was no grey overcoat at all among the garments left.

James' eyes glittered green. There was a cat-like look on his face. He fancied that he saw it all now.

Tom had disregarded that gating. He had gone, no doubt, by some back door or window, as he would not want, in the circumstances, to be seen going. His coat was gone, and that settled it for James. No doubt he had spent a good deal of time rubbing off the paint before he started.

Mr. Silverson left the lobby and headed in the direction of Mr. Linton's study. He was not quite sure yet, but he was going to be sure. On the other hand, he was interfering in a matter that was none of his business and totally unconnected with the Form of which he was master. He had to be very careful how he brought the matter to Mr. Linton's notice. But the schemer had a card up his sleeve.

He tapped at Mr. Linton's door and entered.

Mr. Railton was there, with the master of the Shell. The conversation between the House-master and Mr. Linton ceased as Mr. Silverson appeared in the doorway, and both of them glanced at him.

"Pray excuse this interruption, Mr. Linton," said Silverson politely. "I should like to know where Merry of your Form is to be found, if you can tell me."

"Merry!" repeated Mr. Linton.

"I have a message for him in a letter from his guardian—Miss Fawcett," explained Silverson. "I should like to deliver it without delay, if possible. No doubt you can tell me whether he is in the school."

"Certainly I can," said the master of the Shell. "I have no doubt that you will find him in his study, Mr. Silverson, writing lines."

"I have already looked in his study, sir."

"Oh! He was not there?"

"No."

"He is certainly in the House somewhere," said Mr. Linton. "I told him distinctly that he was not to leave the House until his lines were written and handed to me."

"Thank you, sir; then I will look for him," said Mr. Silverson smoothly. "No doubt I shall find him in the day-room."

"No doubt," agreed Mr. Linton.

But he frowned a little as James withdrew. No exact time had been specified for those lines to be handed in, but Mr. Linton had expected the junior to get them done in order to go out. This looked as if the task was being left over while Tom idled about the House—a sort of thing

of which Mr. Linton did not approve, though he certainly did not guess that Tom had thought of clearing off regardless of lines and gating.

James Silverson for the next half-hour spent a cheerful time inquiring up and down the House for Tom Merry.

He looked into the junior day-room and did not see Tom there—and did not expect to see him. He found Racke and Crooke of the Shell there, but they had seen nothing of Tom Merry.

He went up to the studies again and found Baggy Trimble of the Fourth loafing on the study landing. Baggy, questioned, had seen nothing of Tom Merry.

Most of the Shell fellows were out of doors; but he found Skimpole in his study, and Skimpole had not seen Tom Merry.

Mr. Silverson went downstairs again. He came on Kildare and Darrell of the Sixth; neither of them had seen Tom since dinner.

He went out into the quad, where there were a good many fellows about. He asked fellow after fellow; none had seen Tom Merry.

Mr. Silverson's progress drew general attention to the fact that Tom Merry was missing—which was his object.

He knew from Mr. Linton that Tom had not handed in the lines. Obviously he had not touched them. But he had gone out; there could hardly be the slightest doubt on that subject now.

If he was still in the House he had become invisible—which was hardly to be supposed. He had gone out in direct defiance of his Form-master's order—and Mr. Linton was about the last master at St. Jim's to tolerate such defiance.

Half an hour having elapsed and having produced conclusive proof—to James—that Tom Merry was not in the school, he returned to Mr. Linton's study.

Railton was gone by that time, and he found the master of the Shell sitting down to a pile of Form papers.

"I am sorry to interrupt you again, Mr. Linton," said Silverson. "But as I have failed to find Merry—"

"Merry is in the House, sir," said Mr. Linton acidly.

"It appears that he is not, Mr. Linton. No

one appears to have seen him this afternoon at all since the time you spoke to him. If he has gone out—"

"He cannot have done so," said Mr. Linton through closely compressed lips. "If he has disregarded my distinct order the consequences will be very serious for him. But I cannot think so."

"At all events, sir, he cannot be found," said Mr. Silverson. "As he has lines to bring to you, no doubt you will see him sooner or later. May I ask you to tell him that I have a message from his guardian, and to send him to my study? I have no more time to spare to look for him."

"Very well."

James Silverson withdrew again and smiled a cat-like smile as he went down the corridor. He was well aware of the mood in which he left Tom Merry's Form-master.

Mr. Linton rose from the table in his study. His lips were set. If Tom Merry, in direct defiance of authority, had disregarded the gating and gone out there was stormy weather coming. Mr. Linton was going to ascertain the facts of the case without delay.

Tom Merry was already a topic among a good many fellows owing to Silverson's search for him; he became a still more interesting topic when the master of the Shell repeated that search.

It did not take Mr. Linton long to ascertain that Tom was nowhere to be found and that nobody knew where he was. Some fellows who did not know that Tom was gated mentioned that they had heard that he was going over to Wayland for the football match and supposed that he was gone.

Mr. Linton had no doubt of it, either.

The young rascal had gone—probably only a few minutes after getting out of Linton's sight. No doubt he intended to do those lines when he came in and hand them in later, leaving his Form-master in happy ignorance of the fact that he had disregarded the gating.

Mr. Linton would have remained in ignorance—but for James Silverson's intervention. Now he knew!

He went back to his study at last, with a grim

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face. James Silverson was in his doorway as Linton passed.

"You have seen Merry, Mr. Linton?" he asked.

"No!" said Mr. Linton. "I have not!" His voice was like the filing of a saw.

He went on and entered his study, leaving Mr. Silverson smiling.

### WHERE IS TOM MERRY?

"CHUCK it!" said Monty Lowther. "I'm fed-up, if you are!" agreed Manners.

"Right up to the back-teeth!" grunted Lowther.

Why Tom Merry had not come or, at least, sent some fellow to tell them that he couldn't come, neither Manners nor Lowther could guess.

But after hanging about, kicking their heels for an hour or more, they were fed-up and considerably disgruntled.

It did not seem that Tom could be coming now, at any rate. It was too late to think of seeing much, if anything, of the football match at Wayland—that was definitely off.

They were unwilling to give it up, for if Tom was coming, they did not expect to meet him on their way back to the school. He could not walk out openly when he was gated. So, if he was on his way at last, dodging round by field paths, they would miss him if they went back.

But after more than an hour of it, they had had enough, or rather, too much, and they decided at length to chuck it.

Not in the best of tempers, they walked back to St. Jim's.

It seemed to them most likely that Tom, coming out, had been stopped by Mr. Linton, or by some

prefect to whom he had spoken on the subject. Or else that he had given up the idea—which would have been a sensible thing to do. But in either case he could easily have got some fellow to cut along and tell them so. They could not help feeling rather sore. Hanging about a lane was not an ideal way of spending a half-holiday.

"Seen Tom?" asked Lowther as he came on Talbot of the Shell in the quad.

Talbot shook his head. His face was very serious.

"No; what's up?" he asked. "Is Tom in a row again? Silverson has been asking for him up and down the school, and then Linton—"

"We've been waiting for him, but he never came! Isn't he in his study, then?" asked Manners.

"No; he can't be found at all."

"Well, my only hat!"

"I hear that he was gated, and that Linton thinks he's cut!" said Talbot. "Is that it?"

"That was going to be it—but he never came!" said Lowther in great perplexity. "We were going over to Wayland—but he never turned up. If he's cut, we've seen nothing of him—and he's kept us waiting an hour and a half."

"He wouldn't do that if he could help it," said Talbot.

"Well, he has!" said Manners tartly.

They walked on to the House. They came on Kangaroo of the Shell, and then Grundy, and then Wildrake of the Fourth, and asked them in turn—but all the news they could get of Tom Merry was that he was missing and that two beaks had been hunting for him one after another.

"Well, this beats it!" said Lowther. "He must have cut—but he never came to join us! What the dickens does it mean, Manners?"

"No good asking me!" grunted Manners.

"There's that rat Silverson!"

Mr. Silverson was in the quadrangle. He glanced at the two Shell fellows, and they saw the surprise in his face.

Until he saw them, James Silverson had had no doubt that Tom Merry had joined them and that the three had gone off together. He could see now that that was an error. Wherever Tom Merry had gone, he had not joined up with his comrades.

The master of the Fourth came quickly towards Manners and Lowther as he spotted them.

"Where is Merry?" he asked.

"Don't know!" grunted Lowther.

"His Form-master has been looking for him," said Mr. Silverson quietly. "He desires to see him immediately. Do you not know where he is?"

"No, sir!"

"It appears," said Mr. Silverson, "that he has gone out without leave."

Manners and Lowther did not answer that. They allowed their faces, however, to express their opinion that that was no concern of Silverson's.

"When I saw you in the lane some time ago," said Mr. Silverson, "I thought that you were waiting for him."

"Did you?" said Manners.

"Was not that the case?" snapped Mr. Silverson.

"It's quite a nice afternoon for walking about a lane, sir!" answered Manners deliberately.

"What?"

"A bit cold, and a bit misty, but after all,

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that's only to be expected in October!" said Manners.

James' eyes glinted.

"Do you mean that you refuse to answer my question, Manners?" he asked.

"Exactly, sir!" said Manners coolly. "I will answer questions from my own Form-master, if he asks me any; but I see no reason whatever for answering your questions, Mr. Silverson."

"None whatever!" agreed Monty Lowther.

Mr. Silverson stood looking at the Shell fellows with tight lips and glinting eyes. But he turned away at length without speaking again.

"Rotten worm!" grunted Manners as the Fourth Form master walked away. "He's had an eye open for Tom, of course—he knows he's cut."

"And he's let Linton know—if Linton's been looking for him."

Manners nodded.

"That's it—he would, of course! Well, it's Tom's own fault—he shouldn't have played into that rat's hands like this! He might have known—in fact, he did know—that Silverson was watching for another chance at him. He shouldn't have done it."

"But where the dickens is he?"

"Ask me another."

It was a puzzling mystery to Tom Merry's chums. It looked as if Tom Merry had cut, as planned, but had not joined up with his friends, going off on his own instead, without a word.

That was quite unlike Tom, but if that was not the explanation, Manners and Lowther could not think of one.

Naturally, they did not dream of guessing that Tom had been bagged in the box-room by New House raiders; they were not thinking of Figgins & Co. Had they thought of them, they would not have dreamed that the New House trio had anything to do with Tom Merry's mysterious disappearance.

"The Worm's wriggling out!" said Lowther sarcastically, as he noticed that Mr. Silverson was walking down to the gates.

Manners shrugged his shoulders.

"After Tom, I suppose," he said. "He can't know where he is any more than we do."

"Unless he thinks he's gone blagging at the Green Man," said Monty. "It's what he would think, the rat!"

"Well, wherever Tom is, he isn't there. But where in the name of all that is idiotic is he?"

They asked about a dozen School House fellows one after another—but there was no news. Then, at last, they went over to the New House with the idea that some fellow there might have seen their missing chum. But Figgins & Co. were not to be found in the New House, and could not be questioned; and two or three New House fellows whom they did find knew nothing.

"Gone off to Wayland on his own, I suppose," said Manners at last. "But why he gave us the go-by is a giddy mystery."

"If he was there, some of the fellows who went over must have seen him on the Wayland Football Ground," said Lowther. "We can ask Blake and his crowd when they come in."

And they had to leave it at that—puzzled, anxious, and irritated—but quite unable to guess what had happened—but knowing that whatever had happened Tom Merry was booked for a royal row!

## PROOF POSITIVE!

JAMES SILVERSON caught his breath.

"Oh!" he murmured.

His look was gloating.

Mr. Silverson was not in the public view at the moment. He was leaning on a tree in the hedge of Rylcombe Lane, the hedge screening him from view. Few, if any, passers-by could have noticed him standing there. But though he could not be seen, he could see—and he was watching the Green Man Inn across the lane.

He had no doubt that Tom Merry was there.

He had suspected him of that kind of thing more than once; it was the sort of suspicion that came easily to a mind like James Silverson's.

Now he was sure of it.

Manners and Lowther could not imagine why Tom had not joined up with them after getting out of the school, but James could. He had no doubt that it was because Tom had some destination he preferred not to mention to his friends. He was not merely disregarding gating, but he was going out of bounds. James was sure of that as soon as he learned that Tom had not joined his friends.

So there was the spy of the school—on the watch! And the certainty in his mind was now backed up by conclusive proof.

From where he stood he could see the path that led from the lane past the side of the disreputable inn. On that path was a side door on which James' eyes had long been fixed.

That side door opened, and a boyish figure came out.

And James' gloating eyes fixed on that figure.

Anyone else who had noticed it would not have supposed that it was that of a St. Jim's junior at all, for no school cap was to be seen.

The boy wore a large, thick cloth cap, with no distinguishing mark, which was pulled so low over his forehead as practically to screen the upper part of his face. In addition, the coat collar was turned up to his ears—not only on account of the misty weather, in James' opinion. As if that was not enough, he held a handkerchief to his nose as he emerged.

James could not spot a single glimpse of his face.

But he knew the coat.

He might have recognised Tom Merry's light grey overcoat, anyhow. But now there could not be the possibility of a mistake, because the coat was smeared and stained with red paint.

Tom had rubbed off the worst of that paint before leaving his overcoat hanging in the lobby in the School House. But the smears and smudges and streaks leaped to the eye.

That was the coat James had looked for in the lobby and missed. It was now worn by the schoolboy who stepped quietly from the side door of the Green Man, concealing his face as he emerged.

James did not want telling more than that.

The wearer of the stained overcoat did not come down the path to the lane. He went in the opposite direction, giving James a full, clear view of the back of the overcoat, smudged and stained with red paint.

James watched that overcoated figure with glinting eyes. The young rascal was going up the inn path by the fence that separated it from Farmer Oak's field. Obviously, he was going to clamber over that fence and cut across the field—a safer way than the road for a fellow who had been out of bounds.

James watched him till he disappeared. The matter was settled now. Tom Merry—it was, of course, Tom Merry, for it could not possibly be anyone else—was getting back to the school by the field paths—a longer way than by the lane. It was easy enough for James to get in first. He emerged from his cover, and walked up the lane towards the school with rapid strides.

He smiled as he went.

This was the sack for Tom Merry. And what was the effect going to be on old Miss Fawcett, at Laurel Villa, when Tom was sent home in disgrace? James' rival for a fortune would be quite out of the running after this. James, at least, believed so, and banked on it.

He arrived at the school and hurried into the House. Five minutes later Mr. Railton, the Housemaster, and Mr. Linton, the master of the Shell, knew what James knew; and Darrell of the Sixth was requested to wait at the gates to bring Tom Merry to his Housemaster's study as soon as he came in.

Darrell of the Sixth had been at the gates about ten minutes when Cardew of the Fourth came in.

He did not glance at Cardew. He was waiting for Tom Merry, and he went on waiting for him.

Cardew strolled into the House, an elegant figure in his natty raincoat. He strolled into the lobby where the juniors left coats and caps.

Three or four fellows were there, and Cardew waited, loafing about, till they went out. Then, as soon as he was alone, the dandy of the Fourth swiftly whipped off his raincoat—and the overcoat he had on underneath it!

He hung the overcoat—smudged with red paint—on Tom Merry's peg, the raincoat on his own. Then he sauntered away, smiling, to his study.

In that study he drew out a large cloth cap that was crumpled in his pocket and jammed it out of sight under a heap of papers in his desk.

Then he went down to the day-room, to wait for his friends to come back from Wayland.

Whether the Worm had been nosing that afternoon round the Green Man, Cardew did not know. But he was assured that, if it was so, the Worm had not spotted him. Before going into the inn Cardew had changed the overcoat and the raincoat, putting the latter underneath. After coming out, in a quiet corner of Farmer Oak's field, he had changed back. He had not allowed his face to be seen if there were watchful eyes about.

James Silverson, waiting happily for Tom Merry to come in and take the sentence of the sack, would probably have been less happily satisfied had he had the faintest inkling of Ralph Reckness Cardew's proceedings that eventful afternoon.

But James was not thinking of the scapegrace of the Fourth. He was thinking of the captain of the Shell. James went on waiting, in happy anticipation, for Tom Merry.

### FOUND AT LAST!

"SEEN Tom at Wayland?" asked Manners and Lowther together.

"No!"

"Was Tom Mewwy there, deah boy?"

"I believe so," said Manners. "You never saw him?"

"Not a spot of him!" said Blake.

Blake & Co. had come back from Wayland. Manners and Lowther met them on the study landing.

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"You New House men always want washing," remarked the idea?" "Blow you!"

Blake had a puzzled look on his face. Taggles, the porter, had handed him his study key as he came in, explaining that Master Cardew had left it there for him. Why Cardew had locked his study and left the key with the school porter was a mystery to Jack Blake.

"You fellows didn't come over, after all?" asked Herries. "It was a jolly good match, and worth watching."

"Anything up?" asked Digby.

"You're sure you never saw anything of Tom?" asked Manners.

"Quite," answered Blake. "We saw no end of St. Jim's men, but Tommy wasn't on view. What's up?"

Manners and Lowther explained, puzzling Study No. 6 as much as they were puzzled themselves.

"Well, that beats it!" said Blake. "What the thump has Tom Merry performed the vanishing trick like that for?"

"Wemarkable!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "It means a wow for Tom Mewwy! I was goin' to speak to him vewy severely for spoilin' my jape on that wat Silvahon; but if he is in a wow I shall wefwain fwom doin' so."

"Good luck for Tom!" said Blake. "No row's as bad as a jaw from Gussy!"

"Weally, Blake—"

"There seems to be a jolly lot of mysteries about to-day," said Blake. "Tom Merry vanishes into thin air, and some ass locks up my study and leaves the key with the porter! I want to know what Cardew messed about with my study for while we were out."



remarked Blake. "We'll give you a wash in ink! Like you!" gasped Figgins.

"Yaas, it is wathah a cheek to lock up a fellow's studay without bein' requested to do so; and I suppose he must have locked it up, as he left the key with the portah."

"Oh, have you fellows come in?" Baggy Trimble rolled out of the Fourth Form passage. "I say, Blake, who's in your study?"

"Eh?" Blake stared at the fat Baggy. "Nobody!"

"Somebody jolly well is!" said Trimble. "The door's locked. Did you know? I heard somebody moving and whispering, and I called out, but they didn't answer."

"Bai Jove!"

"What the thump!" exclaimed Herries. "Can that idiot Cardew have locked anybody in our study?"

"Not Tom Merry, I suppose?" grinned Digby. "There's more than one chap there," said Baggy. "I tell you I heard them whispering."

"Well, we'll jolly soon see who it is, if it's anybody!" said Blake. "Come on, you men!"

He walked up the Fourth Form passage, with the study key in his hand. Herries, Digby, and D'Arcy followed him, and Manners and Lowther and three or four other fellows. They were all curious to know what had happened in Study No. 6.

Blake jammed the key into the lock and turned it.

He threw the door wide open. There was a sudden rush from within.

Figgins & Co. had one chance—a small one. They had kept quiet in that study for weary hours. They could only wait till the door was

unlocked. Their one hope was to take the newcomers by surprise, and escape by a sudden desperate rush before they could be collared.

They shot out of Study No. 6 as soon as the door was opened, like three stones from a catapult.

Crash!

It was a surprise—there was no doubt of that. Blake & Co. were wondering who could be in the study; but they did not dream of New House raiders there. The School House fellows in the passage staggered right and left before that sudden, unexpected charge.

Figgins got through, and raced for the landing. Kerr, dodging grabbing hands, flew after him. But Fatty Wynn was not so lucky.

Blake grabbed Fatty Wynn, and dragged him back. And the other fellows, recovering from their surprise, grabbed Fatty on all sides.

Fatty Wynn put up a valiant struggle. And Figgins and Kerr, finding that their comrade had not got clear, turned back at once and rushed to the rescue.

That put paid to their chance of escape.

There were eight or nine School House juniors on the spot, and the odds were too heavy. And other fellows, as the uproar rang down the passage, rushed to the spot, and joined in the fray. Twenty or thirty fellows swarmed round.

"New House cads!"

"Collar them!"

"Scrag them!"

"Mop them up!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

There was a roar of voices in the Fourth Form passage, and for several minutes a terrific struggle.

But the odds were overwhelming. Figgins & Co. almost disappeared under the School House swarm.

Three breathless, dishevelled, untidy New House juniors sprawled on the passage floor, with a dozen fellows sitting or standing on them. That New House raid had had a disastrous ending. Figgins & Co. were in the hands of the Philistines.

"Got 'em!" said Blake, grinning cheerfully. "Got 'em all right! We're going to make you sorry you called, Figgys."

"Yaas, wathah!" chuckled Arthur Augustus. "Blow you!" gasped Figgins.

"What the thump have you been up to in our study?" demanded Herries.

"Nothing, bother you!" gurgled Figgins. "Gerroff my neck, blow you! That cuckoo Cardew locked us in—"

"And left the key with Taggles," grinned Blake. "I see now. Good for Cardew. Get the inkpot out of the study, Dig."

"What-ho!" grinned Dig.

"You New House men always want washing," remarked Blake. "We'll give you a wash in ink. Like the idea?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blow you!" gasped Figgins. "Blow the lot of you! Look here! Keep that ink away!"

"My dear chap, you're going to have the ink," said Blake, taking the inkpot from Dig. "And we'll find some gum to follow."

"Yaas, wathah! And I have some wed paint left, Blake. Shall we let them have the wed paint?"

"Good egg!"

Figgins, gasping, wriggled in many hands. But

Figgins in that extremity had yet a card to play—a card up his sleeve, as it were.

"Hold on!" he panted. "Look here! Have you fellows missed Tom Merry yet?"

"Tom Merry!" repeated Blake. "Do you know anything about him?" exclaimed Manners, in astonishment.

"Just a few," gasped Figgins. "If you've lost him, we can help you find him, if you make it pax."

"Make it pax," Kerr grinned breathlessly. "We can tell you where to pick up Tom Merry, if you've got any use for him."

"Yes, rather!" gasped Fatty Wynn. "And we never had the cake, you know. It wasn't there."

"The cake!" repeated Blake. "Did you come after the cake we took in our pockets to Wayland?"

"Ha, ha, ha!" "But what about Tom Merry?" exclaimed Manners.

He was utterly astonished. Nobody in the school knew anything about the vanished captain of the Shell. And it was amazing if three fellows, who had been locked up in a study most of the afternoon, knew what nobody else knew.

"Pax, and we'll tell you," said Figgins coolly. "Poor old Tommy's pretty sorry for himself by this time, I fancy. Not our fault. We never dreamed that a potty School House ass would lock us in that study."

"But how do you know anything about him?" howled Monty Lowther. "The whole school's wondering what's become of him."

"He's been mssed, then?" asked Figgins. "Yes; and hunted for all over the shop."

"Well, it's not our fault. We couldn't do anything after that cuckoo Cardew locked us in. He can thank Cardew for it."

"But where is he?" roared Manners. "Pax—if you want to know!" retorted Figgins.

"Pax!" said the School House fellows at once. They were more than willing to make it "pax" with the New House raiders as the price of elucidating the mystery of Tom Merry's disappearance.

"O.K.!" said Figgins. "Give them the key, Kerr."

The New House trio, dusty and breathless, were allowed to rise to their feet. Kerr sorted a big iron key out of his pocket, and handed it over to Manners.

"What the thump—" exclaimed Manners. "Look in the Shell box-room," grinned Kerr. "You see, we found the window open, and came in that way. And Tom Merry butted in at the wrong moment. So we fixed him up to keep him quiet till we got through."

"Oh!" gasped Manners and Lowther together. "Tell him we're sorry," said Figgins. "Not our fault he's had to stick there all the afternoon. We expected to be through in ten minutes or so. But that ass Cardew—"

"Mean to say that Tom's been in the box-room all this time?" gasped Manners. "Why didn't he call out, then?"

"Impediment in his speech," explained Figgins.

"What?" "A hanky!"

"Oh!" "Come on, you men!" said Figgins. "Time we got out of this. The bell will be going for call-over any minute now. Ta-ta, you School

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House chumps! Mind you tell Tom Merry that he's got to thank a School House fathead for keeping him tied up like a turkey all the afternoon!"

And Figgins & Co. departed, to return to their own House. Manners and Lowther were already running for the Shell box-room. After them scudded the whole crowd of School House juniors—an army of Fourth and Shell.

Manners unlocked the box-room door and hurled it open. The light was growing dim in the box-room—the early October evening closing in. But it was clear enough for the crowd of juniors to see the figure that sat on the floor, leaning against a box. A sea of eyes stared at him.

"Tom!" gasped Manners. "Tom, old chap!" exclaimed Lowther.

Tom Merry was free in another minute. He rose to his feet, and sat on the box.

If ever a fellow was fed-up, Tom Merry was. Hours and hours, which seemed like days and days, had passed since Figgins & Co. had left him there. He was more than happy to be released at last.

"Oh, my hat!" said Tom. "I've had a time! Thank goodness you came at last! How did you know?"

"Figgins—"  
"I'll jolly well punch his head for leaving me here so long! It's rather more than a joke!" growled Tom.

"You haven't been out of the House?" asked Manners eagerly.

"How could I be, fathead, when those New House sweeps collared me the minute I set foot in this room, and I've been tied up ever since?" grunted Tom Merry.

"Then you haven't—"  
"No."

"Oh, good!" "Jolly good!" said Lowther.

Tom Merry glared at them. "Oh, yes, jolly good!" he hooted. "I've been tied up like a fowl all the afternoon, waiting for some silly idiot to blow in. Awfully good, of course! Quite a happy afternoon, you blithering fatheads! Think I've been enjoying myself, you cuckoos?"

"Bai Jove! There goes the bell!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus. And there was a hurrying of footsteps as the bell for calling-over rang.

Tom Merry left the box-room with his two chums. He was feeling sore and savage, which was not surprising after what he had gone through that afternoon. But his face cleared as he heard what his chums had to tell him, and there was a cheery grin on his face as he went down to Hall for calling-over.

#### UP FOR JUDGMENT!

MR. RAILTON frowned grimly. He was taking roll-call in Hall that evening. His eyes, and a good many other pairs of eyes, fixed on Tom Merry as he came in with Manners and Lowther.

All the other fellows were in; the Terrible Three were last before the doors were closed. They were just in time.

Ten minutes ago, Darrell of the Sixth had come in to report that Tom Merry had not appeared, when Taggles closed the gates and locked them. From which the Housemaster and Mr. Linton could only conclude that Tom was staying out of

gates—adding to his other offences by cutting call-over.

So it was a surprise to see him walk into Hall, and a still greater surprise to see that his face expressed no particular concern.

Plenty of fellows stared at him. They knew that he had been missed that afternoon—that he had been inquired for, and searched for, and that a royal row awaited him. But he walked into Hall as cool as a cucumber.

"There is Merry sir!" said Mr. Linton, in a low voice.

Mr. Railton nodded. "He has returned," he said. "I shall deal with him immediately the roll is called."

The School House master proceeded with the roll. Tom Merry's "adsum" came coolly and clearly when his name was called.

Roll having finished, the House was not dismissed as usual. Kildare of the Sixth called to Tom Merry.

Tom smiled. Manners and Lowther exchanged a wink. The discovery of their chum in the box-room, with unlimited evidence that he had been there all the afternoon, had been an immense relief to Manners and Lowther. Their own weary wait in Rycombe Lane was forgotten now—and Tom, too, did not exactly regret what had happened. Hot temper and resentment of injustice had led him into taking a false step—and Figgins & Co., quite unconsciously and unintentionally, had saved him, as he realised, from making a fool of himself. As matters stood, he was rather amused.

He was going to be called over the coals for having disregarded that gating order. As it happened, he had not left the House at all. He caught James Silverson's eyes on him, with a greenish glitter in them—and almost laughed aloud at the thought of the disappointment that was coming to the Worm.

As yet, Tom had no idea of the more serious charge that was to come—so far, he supposed that he was called up entirely on account of Linton's gating. He did not guess as yet how much Figgins & Co. had saved him from.

He walked calmly up the Hall, all eyes on him. He had never been more self-possessed.

"Merry!" said the Housemaster in a deep voice.

"Yes, sir!" said Tom cheerfully.

"It is my intention to take you to your head-master, and I have little doubt that you will be expelled. But if you have anything to say, you may say it before I take that step."

Tom stared at him blankly.

That Railton, Linton, and Silverson all believed that he had gone out in defiance of his Form-master's order, he knew; but that, serious as it was, was not a matter for expulsion.

"Did you say expelled, sir?" asked Tom.

"I did, Merry!"

"I don't see why, sir! I've done nothing to be expelled for that I'm aware of."

"Do you deny, Merry, that you were at the disreputable resort called the Green Man this afternoon?"

Tom jumped.

"Where?" he gasped.

"Bai Jove!" murmured Arthur Augustus, in the ranks of the Fourth. "Has old Wailton gone pottay?"

"Silence!" called out two or three prefects.

"Do you deny it, Merry?" asked Mr. Railton.

Tom Merry laughed. It was not exactly respectful, but he was amused, angry and contemptuous.

"Merry!" exclaimed Mr. Linton.

James smiled. Tom Merry seemed to be bent on doing his work for him.

"Oh, yes, I deny it, sir!" answered Tom carelessly. "What silly fool fancies that I've done anything of the kind?"

"Merry! How dare you use such expressions!" exclaimed the Housemaster. "I warn you to take care."

"I'm taking care, sir!" answered Tom. "If anyone says that I have been pub-crawling this afternoon, he is either a fool or a liar."

"Merry!" gasped Mr. Linton.

"I have a right to say so, sir!" said Tom, in a voice that reached every corner of the Hall. "It is not true."

"Very well, Merry!" said Mr. Railton grimly.

"You shall answer my questions, and if you can clear yourself, I shall be glad. Is it a fact that you wear a light grey overcoat?"

Tom blinked at that unexpected question.

"Yes, sir!" he answered.

"Is it a fact that that overcoat was splashed

(Continued on the next page.)

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and smudged with red paint to-day, and so is easily recognisable and distinguishable?"

"Yes, sir!"

"Mr. Silverson, you will kindly tell Merry what you saw!" said the Housemaster.

"Certainly!" said Mr. Silverson. "As I was passing the Green Man public-house, coming back from the village, I saw a boy coming out of the side door wearing the coat you have described, and which I recognised at a glance. I did not see his face, which he deliberately concealed with a handkerchief; but the overcoat was unmistakable."

"Oh, gad!" murmured Cardew, in the Fourth.

Ralph Reckness Cardew was very attentive now. But no one was taking any heed of Cardew. All eyes were fixed on Tom Merry, facing the masters.

"Now, Merry, do you repeat your denial?" asked Mr. Railton, with a note of contempt in his voice that made Tom's cheeks burn.

"Yes, sir!" said Tom, his eyes glinting. "I say that Mr. Silverson did not see me there, and that he never saw me at all this afternoon."

James looked at him.

Utterly unscrupulous himself, and believing very little in scruples in others, James nevertheless felt rather a shock at that statement. It seemed to him the most reckless of falsehoods.

"Upon my word!" he exclaimed. "If this boy casts doubt upon the word of a master in the school, Mr. Railton—"

"Merry! Do you venture to do any such thing?" asked Mr. Railton, his voice deepening ominously.

Tom Merry's lips set.

"I say that Mr. Silverson did not see me," he answered. "I say that he has not seen me this afternoon since he was present when my Form-master gave me lines and a gating in this House."

"Be careful what you say, Merry!" said Mr. Linton.

"I can only tell the truth, sir!" said Tom. "Mr. Silverson says that he saw some fellow wearing my overcoat. I can't imagine why any fellow should take my coat instead of his own, especially as it was in a beastly state with smudges of paint on it. But if Mr. Silverson saw the overcoat on a fellow coming out of the Green Man, it was worn by somebody else."

James' lip curled.

That statement, of course, was easy to make. A delinquent who had hidden his face, and had been identified by his overcoat, could say that some other fellow had borrowed the coat. It was the first falsehood that was likely to come into such a fellow's mind.

James, of course, did not believe it. Neither, he could see, did the other masters.

"Then you say that some other boy in this House borrowed your coat without your knowledge, Merry?" said Mr. Railton.

"Not at all, sir!" answered Tom coolly. "I say that if my overcoat was worn at all, it must have been worn by some other fellow, as I have not even seen it since I hung it in the lobby. It is Mr. Silverson, not I, who says that it was worn by somebody. I don't know anything about it."

"Very well!" said Mr. Railton, compressing his lips. "As you deny having been on the spot where some boy wearing your overcoat was seen, tell me at once where you went when you left the school this afternoon."

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"I did not leave the school this afternoon."

"What!" gasped Mr. Railton.

"Mr. Linton ordered me not to leave the House till I had written my lines, sir! I have not yet written them. I have not left the House."

"You have not left the House!" exclaimed Mr. Railton.

"No, sir!"

There was a buzz in Hall. Tom Merry had been hunted for that afternoon all over St. Jim's. He had not been discoverable anywhere. Now he stated that he had not left the House.

James Silverson could have laughed—though he was very careful not to do so! Such a statement was, of course, incredible—ridiculous on the face of it. Every eye in Hall was glued on Tom Merry.

"Merry!" exclaimed Mr. Railton. "Are you aware that you have been searched for this afternoon, and that you could not be found in the school?"

"My friends have told me so, sir."

"Yet you tell me that you have not only not left the school, but that you have not even left the House?"

"Yes, sir."

"This passes all patience!" exclaimed Mr. Railton. "But I will give you one more chance, Merry. Your statement is, as you must know, utterly incredible. Can you explain how it was that you could not possibly be found if you were in the House all the afternoon?"

"Easily, sir."

"Then tell me where you were!"

"In a box-room, sir!"

"Wha-a-t?"

"A box-room!" repeated Tom Merry, with perfect coolness. And that amazing and wildly improbable statement was followed by a dead silence.

#### TOM MERRY'S TRUMP CARD!

TOM MERRY stood unmoved. He knew how utterly improbable his statement must sound. That did not matter in the least, with ample proof to be called as soon as it was required.

Mr. Railton was gazing at him blankly. Mr. Linton was compressing his lips in a tight line. James Silverson could hardly suppress a grin. If this was the best defence the junior could put up, his number was up at St. Jim's, in James' opinion.

There was deep silence for a long moment. Then Mr. Railton spoke in a voice of intense anger.

"Is that answer intended for impertinence, Merry?"

"Not at all, sir!"

"Then how dare you make such an incredible statement?"

"It is the truth, sir!"

"You dare to tell me that you have spent the whole afternoon, out of sight, in a box-room?" exclaimed the Housemaster.

"Certainly, sir!"

"I will listen to no more of this!" said Mr. Railton. "The matter is now clear beyond the possibility of doubt—"

"May I prove what I say before you take me to the Head?" asked Tom, with gentle sarcasm in his tone. "Of course, if you prefer it, sir, I will explain to the headmaster."

"If you can prove your statement, Merry, you will be given an opportunity of doing so. You

say that you have spent the whole afternoon in a box-room?"

"Yes, sir!"

"And what were you doing in a box-room?"

"Sitting on the floor."

"What?" thundered Mr. Railton. "Merry, if you dare to talk such nonsense to me—"

"You asked me, sir!"

"I will hear no more. I—"

"One moment, sir!" interposed Mr. Linton. Linton's eyes were very keenly on Tom Merry's face, and he read the lurking smile there.

The master of the Shell was as keen as a razor, and he suspected that Tom could say more if he chose—which was indeed the case.

Tom was, in point of fact, letting out the facts by degrees, deriving a rather sardonic amusement from pulling James Silverson's leg. Silverson obviously believed that Tom was making matters worse for himself with every word he uttered, and Tom was cheerfully prepared to let him go on thinking so—till he played his trump card. He had proof as soon as he cared to call on it. But he was in no hurry!

"It is useless to question this boy, Mr. Linton," said the Housemaster. "The matter will now pass to Dr. Holmes."

Tom's eyes glimmered! He had no objection to Railton making a fool of himself in the Head's majestic presence, if he insisted on it.

"I think, sir, that Merry may have some explanation to give," said Mr. Linton quietly. "Merry, if you adhere to your statement that you have passed the afternoon alone in a box-room—"

"Certainly, sir."

"You have said that you can prove it."

"Yes, sir."

"Very well! For what reason did you remain in the box-room?"

"Because I couldn't get out, sir!" answered Tom.

"Do you mean that the door was locked?"

"Yes, sir."

"Some person locked you in the box-room?"

"That is so, sir."

"A schoolboy jest, I presume you mean," said Mr. Linton.

"That was all, sir! The fellows never meant to leave me there for more than a quarter of an hour—but, as it happened, they were prevented from coming back. It was not their fault—but I had to stick there all the afternoon."

"And when were you released, Merry?"

"Just on calling-over, sir."

"And who released you?" said Mr. Railton grimly. "If you can call credible witnesses to the fact that you were locked in a box-room, Merry, that will alter the case."

"I can, sir!"

"Their names?"

"Manners, Lowther, Blake, Herries, Digby, D'Arcy, Trimble, Grundy, Wilkins, Gunn, Roy-lance, Wildrake, Tompkins, Talbot, Noble, Gore, Hammond, Lumley-Lunley," recited Tom Merry cheerfully. "There were some more fellows whom I didn't notice specially."

"Oh!" said Mr. Railton.

"Oh!" said Mr. Linton.

James Silverson said nothing. But the expression on his face was very expressive. James saw his victim escaping from the net.

If the crowd of fellows named by Tom Merry had found him locked in a box-room just before calling-over, and released him, the whole case against him went to shreds. And as all the fellows

named were present in Hall, even James could not suspect that this was a fabrication.

Mr. Railton glanced round.

"All the boys named will come forward," he said.

Quite an army of juniors marched up the Hall. There were five or six more, as well as those named by Tom Merry.

"Manners, you may speak!" said Mr. Railton.

"Did you find Merry locked in a box-room?"

"Yes, sir; the box-room in the Shell passage," answered Manners.

"The door was locked?"

"Yes, sir; I unlocked it with the key a fellow gave me—the fellow who had locked Tom in."

"These boys were all present?"

"Yes, sir!" came a chorus.

"Yaas, wathah, sir!" smiled Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "We all saw poor old Tom Mewwy sittin' on the floor with a hanky stuffed in his mouth, sir, and a box-woppe tyin' him up. He must have had a feahfully wuff time, sir."

Mr. Railton breathed hard and deep.

Mr. Linton smiled faintly.

James Silverson bit his lip. Where Tom Merry had been that afternoon was now explained—his

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## DON'T FORGET YOUR "HOLIDAY ANNUAL"!

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disappearance was no longer mysterious. Once more the schemer of St. Jim's saw his house of cards tumble to pieces—leaving him where he had started.

There was a long pause.

Then Mr. Railton spoke.

"Merry, I am glad of this—more glad than I can say! I will not inquire who played this foolish trick on you—that such a trick was played, and that you have not left the House this afternoon, is now clear. I regret that circumstances have cast suspicion upon you. Obviously your overcoat must have been taken by some other boy. The matter is at an end. Dismiss!"

Tom Merry walked out of the Hall in the midst of a crowd of fellows, all grinning cheerily, James Silverson's bitter look following him as he went.

"That ass Figgins!" said Tom Merry in the study at prep.

"He's done you a jolly good turn," said Monty Lowther.

"You were going to make a fool of yourself and he stopped you—jolly lucky he did!" said Manners, with a nod.

"Think I can't see that, fathead?" said Tom.

"Silverson might have had me this time but for those New House sweeps. There's going to be a spread in this study to-morrow—and Figgins & Co. are coming—and it's going to be the biggest spread ever!"

"Hear, hear!" said Manners and Lowther.

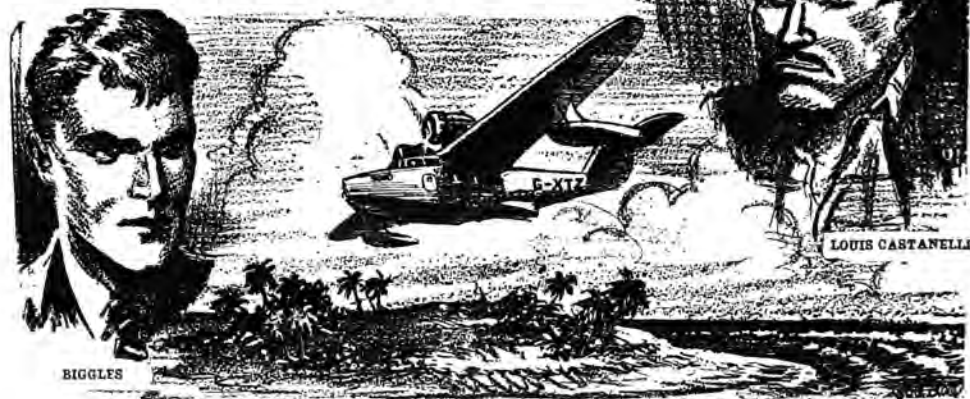
And it was so!

**Next Wednesday: "UP FOR THE SACK!"**

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MORE THRILLING CHAPTERS FROM OUR GREAT NEW SERIAL—TELLING HOW CASTANELLI TAKES THE COUNT, AND BIGGLES & CO. TAKE OFF FOR RUTUONA ISLAND.

# BIGGLES' SOUTH SEA ADVENTURE!



By CAPTAIN W. E. JOHNS.

## BIGGLES HITS OUT!

**MAJOR JAMES BIGGLESWORTH** and his two comrades, the Hon. Algernon Lacey and "Ginger" Hebblethwaite, meet an old Air Force acquaintance—Sandy Macaster, a Scotsman. Sandy tells them that he has discovered a rich pearl bed in the South Seas, and that he is seeking someone to finance an expedition.

Unfortunately, Louis Castanelli, a Corsican crook, knows about Sandy's discovery, but only Sandy has the exact location of the pearl bed. It is near a small atoll, which becomes known as Sandy's Island, in the Pacific Ocean.

Biggles & Co. agree to finance the expedition, and they buy a flying-boat, the Scud, which they intend to use for travelling and diving operations in the South Seas. Then they depart for Vaitie, a small uninhabited island.

Meantime, Sandy has gone on ahead to make arrangements about fuel and oil for the Scud. When Biggles & Co. arrive at Vaitie they discover that Sandy, while on a trip to Tahiti with Namu, the Polynesian skipper of a lugger, has been involved in a fight with Castanelli and his crew of Solomon Island boys, and that the Scotsman has been wounded.

Biggles examined Sandy's wound, and saw at a glance that he was not fit to travel, nor would he be for the next ten days. The gash was an ugly one, and looked inflamed, while Sandy himself was feverish. To go on in such circumstances was to court trouble, for wounds heal slowly in the tropics, and should it turn out that medical attention became necessary, the expedition would have to be abandoned at the very outset of the operations. Rather than risk this, Biggles resolved to delay the final journey to

Sandy's Island until it was clear that the wound was healing satisfactorily. It was an unfortunate beginning, but it could not be helped.

Instead of doing nothing while they were waiting, Biggles suggested that, as Namu's lugger was still at Vaitie, two of them should go to Tahiti to pick up any news that might affect the expedition, assuming, of course, that the Polynesian was willing to make the journey for a monetary consideration. He would not use the machine, for fear of attracting undesirable publicity to themselves in Tahiti. The weakness of Sandy's scheme had been that he was known to Castanelli, but this need no longer apply. And so it came about that the night following their arrival at Vaitie saw Biggles and Ginger on the lugger, bound for Papeete Harbour, Tahiti. Algy had been left behind to look after Sandy, but with instructions to risk the consequences and fly him to Tahiti should the wound become worse.

Three days on the open sea in a small boat was a new experience for Ginger. He was rather nervous at first, particularly when sharks kept them company, as they often did. However, fair weather and a favourable breeze prevailed, and they sailed unobtrusively into the famous island harbour of Papeete on the evening of the third day.

Ginger was breathless at the tropical beauty of the coastal scenery as they sailed along it, and as soon as they were ashore he would have explored it further. But Biggles pointed out that they were not visiting the island for pleasure, and declared his intention of returning to Vaitie as soon as their inquiries were complete. Ginger took what consolation he could from the fact that there would be plenty of time for exploration when they got to Sandy's Island.

With the object of pursuing the inquiries forthwith, Biggles directed his steps towards the Restaurant du Port, as Sandy had advised. It



was nearly full, and Ginger gazed at the extraordinary assortment of humanity it held with fascinated interest.

There were a few well-dressed tourists, mostly Americans, brawny island skippers, bearded down-at-heel white men of many nationalities, half-castes of every shade between black and yellow, Chinese traders and good-looking Polynesians, some with hibiscus or other tropical blossoms tucked behind their ears or into their hair. Odd words of English, French, and unknown languages reached Ginger as he followed Biggles across the room.

Biggles found two seats in a corner, and ordered some food.

"It's rather hard to know where to start making inquiries," he said, above the babble of conversation. "Namu said he would come along if he could manage it, after he has finished some business he has to attend to. I hope he does. I think he could help us."

"You haven't told him anything about Castanelli?"

"No; but he knows that in some way we are concerned with him. Apparently he was with Sandy when he got knifed in the arm, and although Sandy didn't tell him any details, he no doubt drew certain conclusions. In any case he probably overheard enough scraps of our conversation at Vaitie to give him an idea of how the wind blows."

Ginger had taken a liking to the big, athletic, open-faced Polynesian skipper, and he said so.

"I think we might have done better had we taken him into our confidence," he murmured. "He would be better able to deal with this situation than us. He must hear all sorts of gossip. Ah, here he is, coming in now!"

Ginger noticed that more than one pair of curious eyes followed the Polynesian across the room as he walked straight over to the table where Biggles and he were sitting. He pulled out a chair and sat down.

"You look for Captain Castanelli, peut-être?" he said softly, in an odd mixture of English and French.

Biggles regarded him thoughtfully for a moment without answering. Then he nodded.

"Yes, we are interested in Castanelli," he said.

"Bad man."

"So I believe."

"Tres mauvais. Be on your guard."

"Why? Do you know of any reason why he should have anything against us? He doesn't even know us."

"That one make trouble with everybody. He make trouble yesterday. He pull out in the morning."

"You mean he's in Papeete now?"

Yes. His schooner, Avarata, is down in harbour. He back from Rutuona. He sail at dawn. Him plenty stores on board now."

"What was the trouble?"

"He steal boy from Rutuona. Yesterday boy get ashore here and run away. Castanelli catch him and beat him pretty hard. Say he signed on for voyage and try to desert. Haul him back."

"You say he is sailing in the morning?"

"Yes. Governor tell him to clear out."

"Where is he going?"

"He not say. Nobody knows except Castanelli and his boys. They wink and grin when anybody ask."

"How did you learn all this?"

"My boys talk on waterfront—plenty gossip."

"But what happened about the boy Castanelli stole from Rutuona? Has he still got him?"

The Polynesian shook his head.

"Fraid he have to go with Castanelli. Every-one afraid of Castanelli."

"Even the governor?"

"Maybe. Castanelli make much trouble."

"But that's a scandalous thing!" cried Ginger indignantly.

"I savvy bymby that boy Shell Breaker he jump overboard."

Ginger started at the name. Biggles frowned and stared into Namu's face. Sandy had told them that Shell Breaker, with Full Moon, a girl, had saved him from the atoll on which he had been marooned when he had discovered the pearl bed.

"What name did you say?" asked Biggles tersely.

"Shell Breaker."

"You mean the boy Castanelli took from Rutuona?"

"Yes."

In a flash Biggles understood. Castanelli had been to Rutuona. In some way he had learned that Shell Breaker had picked up Sandy, and must therefore know the approximate position of the island. Now, with the boy and stores on board, he was going in search of it.

"I think it's a good thing we came here," Biggles told Ginger grimly. "That's as much as we want to know. We'd better get back to Vaitie right away."

He glanced over his shoulder to ascertain the cause of a disturbance that had started near the door. A sudden silence fell. All eyes were on a short, thick-set man, with an Italian caste of countenance, who was advancing slowly down the room. His smooth, swarthy face was flushed, his eyes were half closed, and from the way he fingered his sleek black moustache he was evidently enjoying the mild sensation his appearance had created.

Namu had half risen to his feet, but he dropped back again into his seat and touched Biggles on the arm.

"Castanelli!" he whispered nervously.

"What about it?" asked Biggles. "You've nothing to be afraid of, have you?"

"Maybe you not understand. If Castanelli go for me I do nothing."

"Why not?"

"Castanelli white man. Me hit Castanelli, I get into bad trouble."

"Ah, I understand!" nodded Biggles, counting out some change to pay the bill. He looked up, however, as out of the corners of his eyes he saw that the Corsican had halted at their table. He was looking down at Namu with an expression of sinister animosity.

"What for you go sneaking round my schooner, eh, you scum?" he grated.

"I no go near your schooner, Captain Castanelli," answered Namu quickly.

The corners of Castanelli's mouth came down in an ugly snarl. He drew back his fist.

"You lying—"

He broke off and stared belligerently at Biggles, who had risen swiftly to his feet.

"Just a minute!" snapped Biggles. "This is my party. I don't remember inviting you."

There was dead silence in the room.

Castanelli glared at Biggles.

"You seeet down!" he gritted viciously.

"Who do you think you are talking to—one of your boys?" asked Biggles curtly.

"Get out of my way!"

"What do you think you are going to do?"

"Pulp zis nigger."

Biggles shook his head.

"Oh, no, you're not!" he said evenly. "If there's any pulping to be done I'll take a hand."

Castanelli's eyes opened wide.

"Do you know who I am?" he snarled in a voice that was evidently intended to intimidate.

"Yes, I know who you are and what you are," returned Biggles evenly. "Your name's Castanelli, and you're just a cheap bully who thinks he owns the islands. Now get away from my table."

Castanelli's arm moved like lightning. His hand flashed to his pocket. It came up with a knife in it.

Biggles snatched up a glass of ice water from the table and flung it in his face. He took a swift pace forward. His left jabbed Castanelli on the solar plexus, and, as the Corsican's head jerked forward under the blow, Biggles' right fist hooked his jaw with a crack that sounded as if someone had broken a cricket stump across the middle.

Castanelli grunted, staggered, and went over backwards, taking with him a table at which a young American tourist had been sitting. The American jumped aside in the nick of time.

"Oh boy, oh boy!" he breathed. "What a beauty!"

Nobody else in the room moved. The proprietor stood nervously wringing his hands, but made no attempt to interfere. Biggles remained where he was, watching Castanelli slowly picking himself up.

The Corsican clambered to his feet and shook his head. His little eyes, glinting with hate, flashed round the room at the witnesses of his discomfiture. They came to rest on Biggles. For a moment he hesitated, breathing heavily.

"I shall see you again some time!" he hissed through his teeth.

"Wait for a dark night when I'm looking the other way—eh?" sneered Biggles. "You wretched little crook! Go and get on with your work of trading liquor round the islands."

Castanelli glanced again round the room. Several people were smiling, but their smiles faded quickly when the Corsican's eyes came to rest on them. Castanelli slowly put his knife away, walked quietly to the door, and disappeared into the darkness.

Instantly a babble of voices broke out.

"Time somebody handed him that," declared a jacket-at-heel beachcomber in a dirty cotton jacket, with no collar or tie.

"Then why didn't you do it?" asked Biggles coldly. "You look as if you've had plenty of time." He turned to the others. "Come on," he said. "Finish your drinks and let's go."

While he was waiting for them a tall, fair-haired man, obviously a Scandinavian, in a well-worn skipper's uniform, came across and held out his hand.

"I'm Sven Orloffsen," he said. "Good work, boy! I own the Caramayo. If I can do anything at any time just let me know."

"Thanks, Orloffsen," returned Biggles. "I'll bear it in mind." He turned and walked towards the door, watched by everyone in the room. "Have you finished your business?" he asked Namu as soon as they were outside.

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"Yes, boss, I've finished."

"Ready to sail?"

"When you say."

"Good! I'm going to find the governor and ask him to inquire into this business of Shell Breaker," declared Biggles. "We've got to get that boy out of Castanelli's hands."

Namu was staring across the moonlit harbour.

"It's too late," he said.

"Why—what do you mean?"

"Castanelli make sail. There go his schooner," Namu pointed.

Following the direction indicated, Biggles saw a schooner moving slowly towards the harbour mouth. Water still dripped from her anchor.

"He didn't waste much time, did he?" he said bitterly. "I'm afraid we can't do anything about it now. But I have a feeling we shall meet that gentleman again. We'd better get back to Vaitie."

They began walking towards where the lugger was moored.

### ARRIVAL AT RUTUONA!

ON their arrival at Vaitie they found Sandy much improved, but he was definitely alarmed by their news that Castanelli had got hold of Shell Breaker.

"I can tell you what happened," he declared furiously. "Castanelli was cruising about looking for the shell bed and put in at Rutuona for fresh water. He would be bound to put in there, because it is one of the biggest islands in the group, and at the same time the one nearest to the area where I went overboard. The natives must have told him that I had been there; you can't blame them for that. Very little happens on the islands, and my staying there would be regarded as a first-class piece of news.

"Naturally, Castanelli would make inquiries, and so find out the names of the boy and girl who picked me up. He was too wise to lay hands on the girl; white men have lost their heads for less—even in recent years; but he got hold of young Shell Breaker and carried him away. His stores were probably low, so he came back to Tahiti to refit before going on to the pearl bed. I'll bet you any money that is what happened."

Namu, who had been listening to the conversation, nodded.

"Yes, he bring plenty stores, and new diving suit," he said.

"How do you know he's got a diving suit?" asked Sandy sharply.

"I sell my copra to Sing Hoo. I know Sing Hoo has diving gear. When I go this time, no diving suit. I say, 'Where diving suit?' Sing Hoo say, 'Castanelli buy it.'"

"Well, that's plain enough," declared Biggles. "We needn't argue about it. It looks as if we'd better get along right away; we can still get there before Castanelli."

"All the same, it's a pity he's got that boy with him," muttered Sandy, with a worried frown.

"It depends on how much the boy has told him," returned Biggles. "I suppose he'd tell everything?"

"I'm not so sure of that. Marquesans can be a funny lot. Their fathers were cannibals, don't forget; in fact, there are still whispers of cannibalism. If they like a white man they'll do anything for him; if not, you could cut them to

pieces before they'd speak. Shell Breaker might have told the truth, but on the other hand he might have led Castanelli up the garden path."

"Will Castanelli call at Rutuona on the way to your island, assuming that the boy has told him where it is?" asked Biggles.

"Bound to. It's a long run to the island. He'll want fresh water. His boys will want fresh nuts."

"Then how about going on to Rutuona and waiting for him to turn up? If the natives would help, we might make him give up Shell Breaker," suggested Ginger. "We could still get to the island first."

"There's something in that," declared Sandy. "By this time Castanelli will be thinking that he's got clear away. The last thing he'll think of is that we've got an aircraft, and that we might get to Rutuona first."

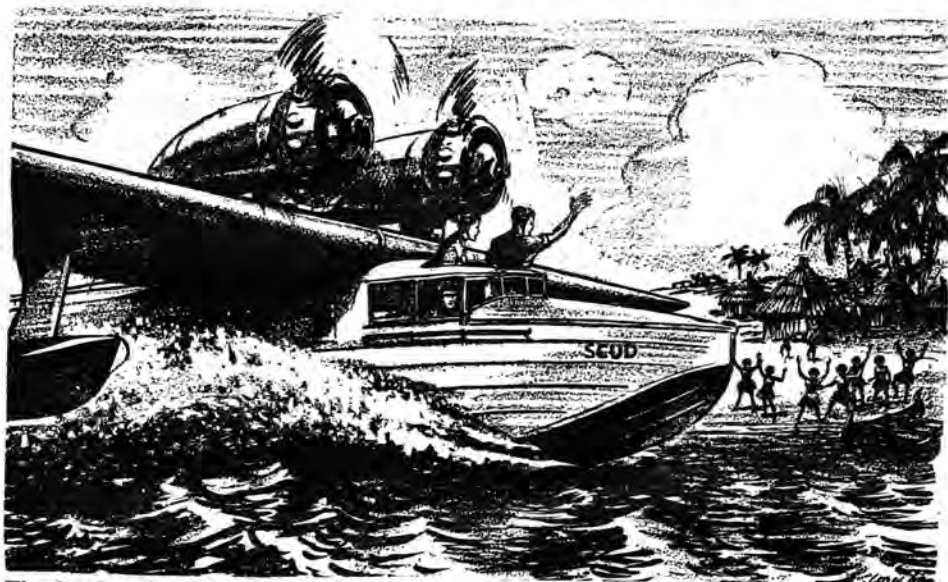
"At any rate, it's worth trying," decided

sometimes passing an island which looked like an emerald lying on blue velvet. On one occasion they flew high over a tiny black speck which Sandy declared was a native canoe. Late in the afternoon he pointed to a spot on the horizon. "Schooner!" he shouted. "That must be Castanelli."

Not long afterwards a faint blur appeared ahead. Sandy had already announced that they were approaching Rutuona, a fact which he was able to deduce, he said, by the colour of the sky in that direction. Instead of the customary deep blue, it held a suspicion of reflected green. That he was correct was soon made manifest when the distant blur crystallised into a line of jagged peaks.

"That isn't my idea of a South Sea island," stated Ginger, as they drew nearer.

"The Marquesas are not South Sea islands in the generally accepted sense of the word," Sandy



The Scud taxied towards the village on Rutuona Island, where a little crowd of natives stood dancing with excitement.

Biggles. "We'll get to Rutuona for a start, and see how the land lies. We'll leave the final decision until then."

The Scud floated on the placid lagoon ready for an immediate take-off. What petrol and stores were not immediately required had already been hidden by Algy while the others were away, so as it was still forenoon there was nothing to delay their departure.

After thanking him for his assistance they said good-bye to Namu, and his crew of three grinning boys, and took their places in the machine. The engines were started, and in a few minutes her keel was cutting a creamy wake across the limpid surface of the blue water. Biggles was at the joystick, with the chart and a compass course pinned on the side of the instrument board.

For hours they flew on at a comfortable cruising speed over an illimitable expanse of sea,

told him. "Most islands are coral formations and lie low, like the Paumotus. The Marquesas are a wee bit terrifying at first; some of them stick straight up out of the sea for a thousand feet or more. But most of them have good beaches, although they run up to wild crags in the interior, which, for the most part, is a mass of jungle."

"Any snakes?" asked Ginger. "They're my pet aversion."

"No; but there are some nasty ten-inch centipedes that you'll do well to leave alone. In fact, you'd better not touch anything until we've had a stroll round. I'll show you what to leave alone."

By this time the machine was gliding down, and Sandy went forward to show Biggles where to land.

"There's the village," he said, pointing to a

few palm-thatched shacks on the edge of a bay. "There's another village on the far side of the island, but it doesn't amount to much. This is the centre of the island's social life. You can come down anywhere in the bay. There are no rocks or anything, but keep an eye open for canoes."

Biggles circled slowly round the village, losing height, and then dropped the nose of the machine towards the blue bay, which was bounded on one side by a long, curving strip of golden beach.

Ginger regarded the scene through a side window, spellbound with delight.

"What a paradise!" was all he could say.

"Yes. I reckon it's as near paradise as anywhere on earth," agreed Sandy. "But like every paradise, there are serpents."

"Serpents?" queried Ginger. "You said—"

"Losh, I'm not thinking of snakes!" declared Sandy. "It's a bit hard to explain," he went on. "Nature is seldom prodigal without throwing in a snag or two. Breadfruit and bananas grow on those hills, but so do poisons. There are orchids in the woods, and there are also sandflies, which bite like fury, and leave a spot of blood where they bite. There are pearls in the sea, but there are also sharks and other unpleasant things. Living coral is one of the loveliest things in the world; but don't scratch yourself on it, or you may be poisoned. And on top of all that, there's sickness. A hundred years ago there were more than ten thousand people on this island. Now there aren't more than two hundred."

By this time the Scud was on the water, taxiing towards the village, where a little crowd of natives stood dancing with excitement.

"This is the first time an aeroplane has landed here. I guess," remarked Sandy, putting his head out of the window. "Kaoha!" he roared.

The excitement on the beach was intensified, and it was clear that Sandy had been recognised—not a difficult matter in view of his red hair.

Several canoes were launched, and by the time the voyagers were near the beach ready to disembark, the Scud was surrounded by natives of both sexes and all ages, some swimming, and some in canoes. They greeted Sandy joyfully by name, calling him Andie. He in turn spoke to several of them personally, and the air was full of delighted greetings of "Kaoha."

Leaving the Scud riding at anchor on the still water the airmen climbed into the canoes, and were soon on the palm-fringed beach.

### THE DEVIL FISH!

SANDY took an old, heavily tattooed native by the arm, and pulled him towards Biggles. "Let me introduce you to Chief Roaring Wave," he said, and shouted with laughter at the alarmed expression on Biggles' face as the chief smelt him carefully before rubbing noses. "The chief doesn't speak much English, but he knows French, although he prefers to use his own Marquesan," went on Sandy. "I know a bit of the lingo, so we shall get on all right."

Biggles noticed that several young men kept in the background, and he called Sandy's attention to the fact.

"They look as if they'd rather hit us on the head with a war-club than be friendly," he observed.

Sandy spoke to the chief, who answered with

a pantomime of actions; then he turned again to the others.

"Roaring Wave says they're afraid of being kidnapped," he said. "That's the result of Castanelli coming here and running off with Shell Breaker."

"Tell him that we are going to try to get Shell Breaker back," answered Biggles.

Sandy spoke again to the chief, and once more translated for the benefit of the others.

"He says everything on the island is ours," he announced. "He means it, too—you needn't doubt that. They'll give you anything, these people. He says he's having a house prepared for us right away, and will give a feast to-night."

"It's all right about the house, but I'm not so sure about the feast," returned Biggles. "If that was Castanelli's schooner we saw he ought to arrive here soon after dark. Rather than get involved in a party we ought to watch for it."

Sandy had another long conversation with the chief.

"He understands," he said, turning to Biggles. "He is going to send some warriors up into the hills to keep watch, and will warn us when the Avarata shows up. Hallo! There's little Full Moon, Shell Breaker's girl-friend. She was with him when they picked me up, you remember."

A pretty girl of about fifteen years of age, in a light-blue pareu—the single garment common to both sexes—her brown skin glowing with health, ran up, laughing, and seized Sandy's hands without any suggestion of shyness.

"Kaoha! Kaoha, Andie!" she said, over and over again.

Sandy pulled her hair affectionately.

"We're going to get Shell Breaker back," he told her.

At the mention of her lost friend her face clouded.

"Aue!" she said sadly. "I weep for him!"

"Come on, let's get some food ashore!" broke in Biggles. "We'd better bring a few presents for the chief, too. We can then make ourselves comfortable for the evening."

Many willing hands helped them with the light task, and they were soon in the house the chief had placed at their disposal.

"How far are we now from your island?" Biggles asked Sandy.

"Twenty to thirty miles, not more."

"Wouldn't it be better to use this place as a base?"

"I'm afraid we should use too much petrol going to and fro. We might have a lot of journeys to make, going out and back every day, and it would soon use up what we've got."

"If we go across to my island it wouldn't even be necessary for us to fly; we could just taxi out to the pearl bed every morning—at least, in calm weather. Then again I doubt if it would be wise to let too many people know what we are doing. There is always a chance of a schooner calling, and these people in all innocence might give our game away."

Biggles nodded.

"I think you're right," he said. "We'll go on to your island as soon as we've settled our account with Castanelli."

The light meal was soon over, and Ginger, unable to contain his curiosity, strolled outside and walked slowly along the deserted beach to a point beyond the village, which consisted merely of a few palm-thatched huts set in a grove of towering coconut palms.

The sea was flat calm. The sun was going

down, leaving the sky a pale egg-shell blue. The fronds of the palms, quivering in the last breath of breeze, came gradually to rest.

The silence was almost uncanny.

Before Ginger stretched the beach, devoid of life except for the innumerable hermit crabs that snapped their shells at his approach before bolting into their holes among the rocks. Farther on, the way appeared to be barred by a huge landslide of rocks that had fallen from a cliff above.

Remembering Sandy's warning, he went no farther, but had stopped to gaze at the scene, when there came a patter of footsteps behind him. Looking round, he saw that it was Full Moon, carrying a primitive fishing-rod.

"Plenty tupa," she said, smiling, pointing at the crabs. "Plenty fish, too. You watch!"

She took Ginger's hand and walked on to the rocks, clambering over them until she found a place that suited her.

Baiting her hook with pieces of shrimp, she soon had a number of small fish flopping on the rock, giving each one its native name as she hauled it out, making Ginger repeat the name after her—tinga-tinga, kiti, tamure, and the like.

Ginger, enthralled, could only gaze down through the crystal-clear water at the strange world below. He could see every cranny and crevice in the rocks, about which darted shoals of brightly coloured fish, appearing to float in air. Once he saw a huge eel, fully fifteen feet long, with a terrifying face, glide smoothly out of a dark cavern and disappear under an overhanging ledge.

He was still watching the spot for it to reappear when he became aware that Full Moon was no longer chattering. Looking round to ascertain the cause of her silence, he saw that she was gazing fixedly at a gloomy cave in the rocks, near to which they had passed in order to reach the place they now occupied, and which they would have to re-pass to reach the beach. He, too, stared at the cave, and experienced an unpleasant sensation akin to fear when he saw something move.

A wild shriek from Full Moon split the silence. Facing the village and cupping her hands round her mouth, she screamed:

"Feke—feke—feke!"

Instantly four or five men dashed out of their houses and raced towards the spot, each carrying a long fish spear. They shouted excitedly at Full Moon as they approached, but she only pointed to the cave.

"Feke!" she said again.

The men formed a rough semicircle round the front of the cave, while Ginger, who was wishing himself farther from the scene, moved back, although he could not get very far on account of the face of cliff that backed the rocks. With a sinking feeling in the pit of his stomach, he could only watch the cave, whence now darted out long arms towards the natives. Full Moon joined him.

"Ta-ta-ta-ta!" she rattled out. "We are not afraid of the ugly beast! See, that is my brother." She pointed to one of the natives. "He has killed many feke. Pakeka! We will kill this one, too."

"What is it?" asked Ginger, although he had already a pretty good idea.

"Debil fish! Big debil fish!"

(Continued on page 36.)



## THE EDITOR'S CHAIR

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

**H**ALLO, CHUMS!—Have you all placed a fixed order for the GEM with your newsagent yet? I should like to emphasise the importance of doing this without delay. The sooner newsagents know how many copies of the old paper are required by readers, the quicker paper wastage will be cut down to an absolute minimum. As I have said, economy in all things is going to play a very big part in winning the war, and it's up to every one of us to pull his or her weight. So if you haven't already done so, step along to your newsagent to-day and place a regular order for the GEM. An order form will be found on page 15.

### "UP FOR THE SACK!"

The first thing you will no doubt ask yourselves on seeing the above title of next Wednesday's great St. Jim's yarn is: "Who's up for the sack?" The answer is: "Tom Merry." The Shell captain has had not a little persecution to contend with from Mr. Silverson, and his sunny temper is failing him under the strain. It is not to be wondered at, therefore, that Tom loses all patience when the Fourth Form master tries the heavy hand on him. The junior hits out at the master, reckless of the consequences. So it is that Tom finds himself booked for expulsion! Is it the end of his career at St. Jim's? You simply must not fail to read this powerful new story.

### "BIGGLES' SOUTH SEA ADVENTURE!"

Our new pals, Biggles & Co., are now beginning to make things hum on their expedition in the South Seas. In the next chapters they set out to rescue Shell Breaker from Castanelli, and it proves a thrilling adventure—though the Corsican crook finds it anything but thrilling! He, in his turn, launches an attack on the Scud, and it's touch and go for Biggles & Co.'s flying-boat. You will enjoy every word of the next instalment of Captain Johns' brilliant new serial.

### "FOES OF THE REMOVE!"

Jack Drake has certainly made his presence felt since he joined up in the Remove at Greyfriars—as Coker and Bolsover have discovered! But the latter is on the warpath in next week's exciting yarn—and Drake is challenged to a fight. How he fares against Bolsover makes exciting reading.

In conclusion, let me remind you that the "Holiday Annual" is once again proving a best-seller. If you haven't had it yet, give your parents, or that kind aunt, a gentle reminder!

All the best, chums!

THE EDITOR.

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**JACK DRAKE KNUCKLES UNDER TO THE BULLY OF THE GREYFRIARS REMOVE—BUT THERE'S MORE IN JACK'S MOVE THAN MEETS THE EYE!**



### COKER CALLS IN!

**B**ILLY BUNTER put a fat and grinning face in at the doorway of Study No. 3 in the Remove passage at Greyfriars.

"Coker's coming!" he announced.

There were four juniors in the study—Russell and Ogilvy, and Jack Drake and Dick Rodney, the two newcomers. They were sitting round the table at evening prep.

Billy Bunter evidently expected his announcement to make an impression. But it didn't. Russell and Ogilvy and Rodney went on with their prep, regardless. Only Jack Drake glanced up carelessly, and asked:

"Who's Coker?"

Jack Drake had only been a few days at Greyfriars School; hence his ignorance of the existence of that great man, Horace Coker of the Fifth.

Bunter blinked at him in surprise through his big spectacles.

"Who's Coker?" he repeated.

"Yes, who's Coker?" said Drake. "Some Remove fellow I haven't met yet?"

"He, he, he!" chortled Bunter. "I'd like to see Coker's face if he heard you call him a Remove fellow. He's in the Fifth."

"Oh, he's in the Fifth!" said Drake. "What is he coming here for, then?"

"You!" said Bunter.

"I see—a friendly call. This is very polite of a fellow in the Fifth, but we're doing prep, and we can't have visitors now. Run away and tell Coker to make it a bit later."

Billy Bunter chortled again.

"He's bringing a fives bat with him," he said.

"For me?"

"What-ho!"

"I can't accept presents from fellows I don't know," said Drake.

"He, he, he! Wait till Coker starts in with the fives bat," grinned Bunter. "You won't have much choice."

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# COKER'S CATCH!

By Frank Richards.

Drake did not look alarmed. It had already dawned upon him that the forthcoming visit of Coker of the Fifth—whoever Coker was—was of a hostile nature.

"What have you been doing to ruffle Coker?" asked Ogilvy, looking up.

Drake shook his head.

"Blessed if I know! Never knew there was a fellow of the name at Greyfriars at all."

"Oh, draw it mild!" said Bunter. "You bagged the Fifth Form brake at the station the day you came here, and Coker was punched."

"Oh, was that Coker?" said Drake. "Come to think of it, I sort of remember him now. A lanky fellow with a face like a gargoyle, is that Coker?"

"He, he, he! Here he is."

"You cheeky young sweep!" roared a voice in the doorway. "Are you talking about me?"

Coker of the Fifth strode into Study No. 3.

He had a fives bat in his hand and a wrathful frown on his rugged face. He had arrived just in time to hear the new junior's flattering description of him.

Drake rose to his feet, and Dick Rodney followed his example. Evidently there was going to be trouble.

Ogilvy and Russell exchanged a glance. Coker's trouble with the new junior was no business of theirs; but his invasion of a Remove study—especially as it was their study. So they rose, too.

Horace Coker did not heed them. He fixed a threatening glare upon Jack Drake.

"I haven't had time to attend to you before," he said. "But if you think I've forgotten you, you're mistaken."

Drake nodded, with a smile.

"So kind of you to remember me," he said.

"You bagged our brake on the first day of term," said Coker. "I was dropped in the road."

"Yes," said Drake, in a tone of polite inquiry.

"I never allow fags to cheek me," continued Coker.

"I never allow the Fifth to cheek me," remarked Drake.

"What?"

"Deaf, old scout? You should bring your ear-trumpet."

"You cheeky young ass! Why, I'll—I'll—" Coker made a stride towards the new junior. "You're going through it, Drake; not that I bear any grudge—I'm above that I hope—but I'm a firm believer in keeping fags in their place. Cheeking the Fifth is outside the limit. I'm going to lick you, chiefly for your own good."

"That's really kind," said Drake, with a laugh. "But now I see you, I see that my memory was all right."

"Eh? What do you mean?"

"You are the lanky chap with a face like a gargoyle," explained Drake.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Horace Coker took a harder grip on the handle of the fives bat. Coker was not considered a beauty by his dearest friend—only his affectionate Aunt Judy thought that Horace was good-looking, and she was prejudiced. But there were really several degrees of plainness between Coker and a gargoyle.

"I came here," said Coker, breathing hard, "to give you a licking, Drake, to teach you your place. If you get it harder you can thank yourself. I was going to give you a dozen. I'll make it two dozen."

"Thanks!"

"Another word of cheek and I'll make it three dozen!" roared Coker.

"Make it a round gross," suggested Drake.

"What?"

"Or a thousand! Go the whole hog while you're about it," said the new junior cheerfully.

Coker wasted no more time in words. He made a rush at the new junior to clutch his collar with his left hand, his right being occupied by the fives bat.

Coker's intention was to jerk the Removee across the table, and then lay on the bat with vigour. To Coker it seemed that this was exactly what the cool new junior wanted.

But opinions differed on that point.

Jack Drake backed quickly, and as Horace Coker closed in on him Dick Rodney thrust out a ready foot, and the Fifth Former stumbled over it.

Before he could recover himself Drake made a spring, and bumped into the stumbling Fifth Former, sending him reeling.

Coker, to his great surprise, crashed to the floor, and the bat flew from his hand.

In one moment the burly Fifth Former would have been on his feet again, raging. But he was not given that moment. Drake and Rodney were on him together, and the burly Horace was flattened out on the floor, face down, with a knee driving into the small of his back.

"Why, I—I—I'll—" spluttered Coker, in amazement and rage. "I'll—I'll— Gerroff! Grooogh! Gerroff! I'll—"

He struggled furiously, and he was so big and burly that the two juniors together had difficulty in pinning him down.

"Lend a hand, you duffers!" shouted Drake. "Here, Bunter, sit on his head."

"He, he, he!"

Billy Bunter chuckled, but he did not offer to sit on Coker's head. He preferred to keep at a safe distance from the enraged Horace.

But Ogilvy was ready. He sat cheerfully on the back of Coker's head, and Coker's nose ground into the carpet like a gimlet.

"Grooogh!" came from Coker in muffled accents.

"Jump on him, Russell!"

"What-ho!" grinned Russell.

Russell stood on Coker's legs. After that the great Horace, burly and muscular as he was, struggled in vain.

"Pick up the bat, Rodney," said Drake, still with his knee grinding in Coker's back. "The dear boy came here to give me a dozen! We'll let him off with the same. Go it!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You—you young villain—if—if you dare—" spluttered Coker.

"Go it, Rodney!"

"I'm going it!"

Whack, whack, whack!

## REVERSING THE PROGRAMME!

"OH! Ow! Oooooooop!"

With Ogilvy sitting on the back of his head Coker's yells were rather muffled. But they were very loud. They rang through the Remove passage, muffled as they were.

Whack, whack, whack!

Coker was strong on discipline, and he prided himself on what he called "a short way with fags." But for the fags to take a short way with Coker was astounding—to Coker! He could hardly believe the evidence of his own senses. But he had to believe the evidence of the fives bat! It was whacking away with all the strength of Dick Rodney's arm, which was fairly muscular.

Whack, whack!

"He, he, he!" howled Bunter, and he shouted into the passage: "I say, you fellows, roll up! Coker's being batted! He, he, he!"

There was a rush of Removees to the doorway.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" exclaimed Bob Cherry.

"Is carpet-beating going on here?"

"Coker-beating!" explained Drake.

Harry Wharton looked in, and chuckled. Behind the captain of the Remove appeared a dozen other fellows. Even Lord Mauleverer came along to see Coker batted.

Coker's wild howls were answered by roars of laughter from the Remove.

"I—I—I'll spifficate you!" roared Coker, struggling wildly. "I'll smash you! Yaroooh! Gerroff! Yoop! Help!"

Whack!

The passage was crammed with juniors now, staring into the study and roaring with laughter.

"Hallo, he's had the dozen!" said Drake.

"Ring off a minute, Rodney! Have you had enough, Coker?"

"Yaroooooh!"

"I don't know Coker language. Does he mean 'yes' or 'no,' you fellows?"

"Probably 'yes,' said Harry Wharton, laughing. "Speak out, Coker! Don't be bashful!"

"I'll pulverise you!" roared Coker. "Gerroff my neck!"

"Give him another three, Rodney!"

"You bet!"

Whack, whack, whack!

"Have you had enough, old scout?" queried Drake.

"Ow, ow! Oh! Ah! Yes!" spluttered Coker.

"Good! Will you go away quietly now like a good little boy?"

"I'll smash you!"

"Give him another dozen, Rodney!"

"Right-ho!"

"Hold on!" gasped Coker. "I—I—I'll go—I'll go if you like— Oh crumbs! I'll go!"

"Quietly?" asked Drake.

"Yow-ow-ow! Yes!"

"Let him up," said Drake.

Coker of the Fifth was released.

He staggered to his feet, ruffled and dishevelled and crimson. He stood rather unsteadily on his feet; the batting had told upon him. He glared at Jack Drake with concentrated wrath.

"You—you cheeky little beast—"

Drake pointed to the door.

"Hook it!" he said.

"Kick him out!" roared Bolsover major of the Remove. "What's a Fifth Form cad doing in our passage? Kick him out!"

"Hear, hear!"

"Collar him!" shouted Johnny Bull.

Coker of the Fifth glared round him, rather

apprehensive now. The great Coker never stopped to count odds—which was rather unfortunate for him in some cases—but he realised now that he had landed himself into a hornets' nest.

"I—I—I'm going!" he gasped. "I—I'll deal with you another time, Drake!"

"Any time you like, old sport," said Drake. "Bring a fives bat with you when you come—it will be wanted, you know."

"Kick him out!"

Coker made a rush for the passage.

It was crowded with Removites, and they did not seem prepared to allow the invader of their quarters to escape unscathed.

Coker had to run the gauntlet to the stairs, and by the time he escaped down the staircase he was feeling as if he had been in a motor-car collision. When he arrived in his study the state he was in astonished Potter and Greene, his studymates.

Jack Drake & Co. returned to their prep in a cheerful humour. Probably there was going to be further trouble with Coker of the Fifth, but the prospect did not worry them.

Bolsover major looked into the study, with a surly expression on his face. There had been trouble already between the bully of the Remove and the new boy, and there was no love lost between them. Jack Drake gave him a cheery nod, however.

"We've kicked Coker out," said Bolsover major. "All the same, I fancy he's right in thinking that what you want is a licking, Drake. You're too cheeky by half."

"Same to you, old top!"

"You've got a lot too much assurance about you for a new kid," said Bolsover major. "I don't like it."

"Lump it, then!" suggested Drake.

"If I take you in hand myself—" roared Bolsover.

"You're welcome!"

Bolsover strode into the study.

"Here, chuck it!" exclaimed Oglivy. "We've got to do our prep—we're late already. Get out, Bolsover!"

"That cheeky cad—"

"You can scrap in the gym another time if you want to scrap. Get out of this study!"

"I'll please myself about that!" snorted the bully of the Remove.

"All hands!" said Oglivy. "Collar him and pitch him into the passage."

Four juniors advanced together on the bully of the Remove, and Bolsover major backed into the passage. Dick Rodney kicked the door shut after him.

Bolsover reopened it the next moment.

"I'll talk to you in dorm, Drake," he snapped.

"My dear chap, don't—you're a bore, you know—"

Slam!

Bolsover major departed, and Study No. 3 settled down to prep at last.

### BOLSOVER ASKS FOR IT!

**J**ACK DRAKE rose to his feet and stretched himself. Prep was over, and the juniors were free until bed-time.

"What about a run round the quad before dorm?" asked Drake.

"Right!" said Rodney.

The two chums left the study and strolled out

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into the starlight of the quadrangle, enjoying a trot round the old quad after the labour of prep in the warm study.

As they trotted along the grassy path in the shadow of the school wall a voice came to their ears from the gloom.

"You two can come with me."

It was the voice of Coker of the Fifth.

"Cover!" murmured Drake.

The two Removites backed quietly into the deep shadow of the wall. Coker and Potter and Greene of the Fifth were coming along the path, talking as they came. The chums of the Remove did not want to run into Coker & Co. in that secluded spot. It was only too probable that Horace Coker would have taken dire vengeance there and then.

"Oh, let it drop, Coker!" said Greene. "Those Remove fags aren't worth troubling about. Besides, they always keep their end up."

Coker snorted.

"I've been batted!" he said. "Me, you know—a Fifth Former! I'd like to know what Greyfriars is coming to when a Fifth Form chap is batted on the trousers by a scrubby gang of fags. I've got to punish them, if only for the sake of the dignity of the upper Forms."

Potter grunted. He had a strong suspicion that Coker was thinking less of the dignity of the upper Forms than of the ache left by the batting.

"No good rooting about in the Remove passage," said Greene. "It only means a row and a rag."

"I've got another idea. We'll drop into their dorm after lights out."

"Oh, my hat!"

"I know which is Drake's bed," pursued Coker, evidently much taken with his idea. "I'll take a cane with me, and give him a jolly good licking—see? That's what he wants; it's really for his own good, in a way. Fags can't be allowed to cheek their superiors; it isn't good for them. I can find Drake's bed in the dark easily enough—in fact, I've made a note of it. It's just opposite the door, and there'll be some starlight. Before the Remove know what's happening Drake will have had a thundering good licking, and we can retire without any undignified scrapping with fags."

"Good!" said Potter. "You won't want us; we shall only be in the way."

"Might blunder, you know, and cause some undignified scrapping," said Greene gravely. "This is a thing you can handle best on your own, Coker, with your well-known tact."

"Well, if you think so, Greene—"

"No doubt about it—"

Greene's voice became inaudible in the distance. The three Fifth Formers had passed without observing the two dim figures in the black shadow of the wall.

Drake and Rodney did not move till the steps of the Fifth Formers had died away.

Then they came out into the path again, grinning. They had not been able to help hearing the remarks of Coker & Co. as the latter passed them.

"Forewarned is forearmed," grinned Drake. "I fancy Coker will find me wide awake when he comes to the dorm. I'll take a stump to bed with me."

Rodney chuckled softly.

"Same here," he said.

The two chums came into the schoolhouse smiling after their trot. It was close on bed-time now, and they joined the Remove on their way to the Lower Fourth dormitory.

Billy Bunter gave them a fat grin.



"Bolsover's got his rag out," he remarked. "He's going for you in the dorm, Drake."

"Alas!" said Drake gravely. "I wonder if there's time to make my will before going to bed?"

"He, he, he!"

Wingate of the Sixth shepherded the Remove to their dormitory, and left them to turn in. Bolsover major shut the door after the captain of Greyfriars had departed. Then he came over to Drake, who was sitting on the edge of his bed, taking his boots off.

"Now, you cheeky young cad—" began Bolsover.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! More trouble?" called out Bob Cherry. "Let the new kid alone, Bolsover."

"Mind your own business, Bob Cherry!"

"Chuck it, Bolsover!" exclaimed Harry Wharton. "What the trump do you want to pick a row with Drake for?"

"You picked a row with him yourself the first day he came," sneered Bolsover major. "Isn't anybody but your noble self allowed to row with him?"

"Go to bed," said Frank Nugent. "Wingate will be back in a few minutes—"

"You shut up!"

Drake sedately went on taking his shoes off. Bolsover major gave an aggressive glare round the dormitory.

"Tisn't the first time a new kid has been ragged," he said. "I'd like to see anybody stop me ragging him! I'm going to duck that young cad!"

"Well, Drake can look after himself," said Bob Cherry. "If he can't I'll lend him a hand."

"Rats!"

Bolsover major grasped the new junior as he sat on the edge of the bed, and jerked him towards the washstand. The Removes looked on breathlessly. Drake had already shown his fighting quality, and all the Remove expected to see a terrific scrap on the spot.

They were surprised and disappointed.

Jack Drake made no resistance. He seemed as wax in the powerful hands of the Remove bully.

Bolsover major, rather surprised himself, jerked the new junior to the washstand and proceeded to duck his head in the jug of cold water there.

Still Drake did not resist.

Dick Rodney made a step forward to help his chum, but he paused. He was perplexed, but he knew that Drake must have some reason of his own for not offering resistance. He was ready to help his chum if his help was wanted—but apparently it was not wanted.

Splash!

Drake's head splashed in the jug, with Bolsover's grasp on the back of his neck.

"Ow! Grooogh!"

The bully of the Remove released his victim and stepped back, with a laugh of contemptuous disdain.

Drake, still calm and quiet, seized a towel, and began to towel his streaming head.

"Well, my hat!" ejaculated Bob Cherry, in wonder.

There was scorn in the looks cast at Drake by all the Remove. A fellow who would take such bullying tamely was a surprise to them.

"That's a lesson for you," sneered Bolsover major contemptuously.

"Thanks."

"You'll get some more like that if you don't mind your p's and q's."

"I'll remember."

Bolsover major gave a mocking laugh, and turned away.

Drake picked up the water-jug.

"Look out, Bolsover!" shouted Skinner.

But Bolsover was in no danger. Drake, jug in hand, stopped to Bolsover's bed.

There he up-ended the jug, and the water swamped on the bed.

"Why, you young rotter!" roared Bolsover major, in amazement and consternation. "You've soaked my bed through!"

"Well, you ducked my head," said Drake.

"One good turn deserves another."

"Why, I—I—I'll—" Bolsover spluttered. "You silly young fool, do you think I'm going to sleep in a drenched bed?"

"Do you prefer the floor?"

"I prefer your bed," said Bolsover major, going to it.

"I say, you can't have my bed, you know!" exclaimed Drake.

## DON'T FORGET YOUR "HOLIDAY ANNUAL"!

"Can't I?" sneered Bolsover major. "Well, come and turn me out of it, that's all. You're welcome to try."

Drake paused.

"I won't do that—" he began.

Bolsover chuckled.

"No, I fancy you won't!" he said. "You can try if you like! I warn you that I shall thrash you till you can't squeak! But come on and try!"

"What's the good?" said Drake. "You're too hefty for me, you know—"

"I fancy so."

"If you insist on having my bed, Bolsover—"

"I do, you fool!"

"Well, you will have to have it, then, I suppose, but it's rather hard lines on me."

Dick Rodney burst into an irrepressible chuckle. He understood now.

Bolsover was blissfully ignorant of the fact that Coker of the Fifth had planned to visit that bed in the dark with a cane, and thrash the occupant thereof. That was a discovery Bolsover major was to make later.

Bolsover stared at Rodney, surprised by the chuckle.

"Oh, you think it's funny, do you?" he said.

"Yes, rather," said Rodney. "You'd better turn into my bed, Drake, after Wingate's gone. You can't sleep in Bolsover's."

A few minutes later Wingate of the Sixth came in to see lights out. Every bed was occupied, and the Greyfriars captain bade the juniors good-night and departed. Then Drake stepped promptly out of the drenched bed, and joined Rodney. There was not much room, but it was an improvement on the one he had left. From Drake's own bed, now occupied by Bolsover major, there came a sneering chuckle.

"Drake, you young cad—"

"Hallo, Bolsover, you rotter!"

"You've had a lesson. Do you want me to come and give you another?"

"No, thanks!"

"I'm going to see that you don't get your ears up."

"Thanks again!"

"You're a rotten funk, anyhow!"

"More thanks!"

"Yah! You're not even worth kicking!" said Bolsover major scornfully.

"Right! Good-night!"

And Bolsover major gave a final contemptuous snort, and settled down to sleep.

### WHAT COKER CAUGHT!

**H**ORACE COKER chuckled softly. It was past ten o'clock—an hour at which it was pretty certain that all in the Remove dormitory would be fast asleep. Coker opened the door noiselessly and listened. From the silence of the dormitory came a rumbling sound, which, at hearing, hinted of an air-raid in the distance; but after a moment was recognised as the snore of Billy Bunter.

And Coker chuckled—though inaudibly.

All had gone well—as far as Coker knew. Quietly and surreptitiously he had stepped out of the Fifth Form dormitory, with most of his clothes on, and a cane in his hand. With equal surreptitiousness he had stolen away to the Remove sleeping quarters.

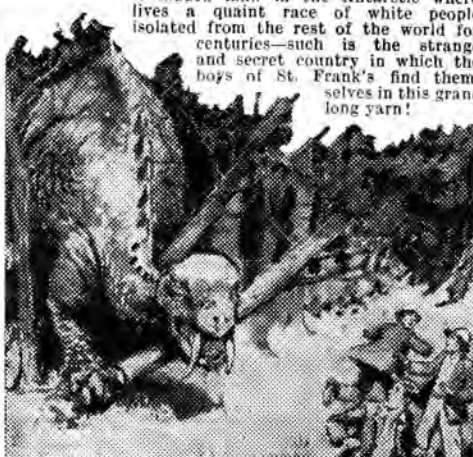
Now he had arrived!

He knew Drake's bed—as he had mentioned to his chums, he had made a special note of it. Coker rather prided himself upon the efficient way he did things. He wasn't the fellow to make a mistake about a bed.

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He stepped softly into the dormitory, and closed the door with scarcely a sound.

A dim starlight fell in at the high windows—clear enough for the intruder to see his way about, and distinguish one bed from another.

It was the bed nearest the door that Coker wanted—the bed he knew to belong to Jack Drake. He grinned as he stopped at the bedside, gripping his cane—a thick, stout cane borrowed from a prefect's study.

The junior who had had the astounding nerve to think of batting Coker, was at his mercy now. For his own good—and for other reasons—Coker was going to give him the licking of his life.

But he would not begin while the fellow was asleep—Coker was a considerate chap, in his own way. Such a proceeding might have had dangerous results to the nervous system. Coker decided to awaken his victim by jerking the bedclothes off. It was quite cold enough to waken a sleeper very suddenly if the bedclothes went.

Coker got a grip on the blankets, and tugged. Nearly everything came off the bed in one powerful whisk.

There was a sleepy grunt, and the junior in the bed started up into a sitting position, spluttering with astonishment.

"Grooogh! What—oh—ahrrr marrer—why. I'll—who's playing tricks? I'll—I'll—yaroooh!"

Before Bolsover major could splutter any further, Coker's grip was on the back of his neck. Coker's powerful arm twisted him over.

Whack!

The cane rang across Bolsover major's lower limbs, protected only by his pyjamas.

"Yarooop!"

The loud and prolonged yell that Bolsover major gave echoed through the Remove dormitory from end to end.

Lash! Lash!

Bolsover struggled savagely, yelling wildly. But burly as he was, he was helpless in the big Fifth Former's grip.

"I told you to expect it!" gasped Coker, as he lashed away with the cane. "I warned you—"

"Yaroooh!"

"You'll bat me, will you—bat a Fifth Former?" chuckled Coker. "My dear chap, you'll learn better when you've been a bit longer at Greyfriars! Take that, and that, and that—"

Lash! Whack! Lash!

"Yow-ow-ow! Help! It's Coker! Help!" shrieked Bolsover major.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Coker!" shouted Bob Cherry. Bob was out of bed with a spring, grasping his pillow.

All the Removites were awake now; even William George Bunter had ceased to snore.

Voices were calling on all sides to know what was the matter. Bolsover major's frantic howls were answer enough.

"Rescue! Yoop! Coker, you rotter, leave off! Oh dear! Help!"

Harry Wharton leaped from his bed.

"Back up!" he shouted.

Whack, whack, whack!

"There!" panted Coker. "That's a lesson for you, young Drake! Now I'll give you a rest."

"Yaroooh! You silly idiot, I'm not Drake!" shrieked Bolsover major.

"Eh?" gasped Coker, starting back.

"You mad potty duffer, I'm Bolsover!"

(Continued on page 36.)



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## COKER'S CATCH!

(Continued from page 34.)

shrieked the bully of the Remove, writhing on the bed from the anguish of the thrashing.

"Oh, my hat!" stammered Coker.

"Go for him!" yelled Johnny Bull.

"Wharrer you doing in Drake's bed if you're not Drake?" gasped Coker, in bewilderment.

"I—I—"

"Yow-ow-ow!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Drake.

Coker realised his error. But he had no time to repair it. He had given Bolsover major all the "licks" there was time for. Removites were crowding round him in the gloom now with pillows and bolsters.

Coker beat a rapid retreat to the door. He had only time. As it was, he received a hefty swipe from Bob Cherry's pillow as he escaped, and he stumbled in the passage, and went on all fours. He picked himself up and fled.

"Coker—it was Coker!" gasped Bob. "The cheek-raiding our dormitory all on his lonely own! Whom was he going for?"

"Yow-ow-ow!"

"Bolsover—that you tootling, Bolsover?"

"Oh crumbs!" gasped Bolsover. "Why, I'll smash him to-morrow—somehow. He's licked me black and blue—the beast had a cane—he thought it was Drake in this bed—yow-ow-ow!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Drake. Dick Rodney echoed his shout of merriment. Bolsover major had received what he had asked for; there was no mistake about that.

"Dash it all, it's not a laughing matter if Bolsover's been walloped with a cane!" exclaimed Harry Wharton.

"Ha, ha! It is! Are you sorry you bagged my bed, Bolsover?"

"Why," exclaimed Bob Cherry, "you—you knew—"

Drake yelled.

"Ha, ha, ha! Of course I knew! Do you think I should have let that overgrown ass bully me, if I wasn't pulling his silly leg?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You knew?" raved Bolsover major.

"Of course I knew!" chuckled Jack Drake.

"I knew Coker was coming here to-night to lay into me with a cane. I knew he knew my bed, and so I let you bully me out of the bed, dear boy. Perhaps you won't be so keen on bullying another time."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

There was a howl of merriment from the Removites. They understood now why the bully of the Form had had such an easy time with the new junior. Bolsover major understood, too—now. His knowledge came a little too late to be of any use to him.

"You—you—you cad, it was a plant!" he gasped.

"Exactly!" said Jack Drake coolly. "And now I've got a jolly good mind to turn you out of that bed. Still, as you've had such a thundering licking, you can keep it for the night. Don't be such a rotten bully another time, Bolsover, and you won't collect up a thrashing by mistake."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I—I—I—" Bolsover major gasped with rage. "I—I don't feel like thrashing you now, Drake—Ow—ow!—But to-morrow—I'll thrash you till you can't squeak! Ow! Wow!"

"Hear, hear!" said Drake cheerily. "Shut up now, and let's go to sleep."

"Ow! Wow! Wow!"

The Removites chuckled themselves to sleep—but it was a long time before slumber visited Bolsover major. He was the only fellow in the Remove who failed to see the comic side of Coker's catch.

**Next Week: "FOES OF THE REMOVE!"**

## BIGGLES' SOUTH SEA ADVENTURE!

(Continued from page 29.)

Ginger pressed himself back against the cliff as the huge octopus slowly emerged from the cave to give battle to the prancing warriors who menaced it. Never in his life had he seen such a horror. It was a huge, dark purple mass of flesh, covered with warty excrescences, with a head rather like that of an elephant. In it were set two enormous slate-grey eyes, gleaming with demonic hate. Eight arms coiled and groped out fourteen or fifteen feet in front of it. Ginger was only a few yards from their extremities.

The natives stood their ground, slashing and stabbing bravely, but the octopus advanced. One of its arms touched Ginger's leg, and at once he cried out. One of the warriors gripped the piece of tentacle still clung to his leg with a shudder of loathing he

launched a furious attack, with their knives as well as

spears. Several of the coiling arms were severed or mutilated, and to Ginger's unspeakable horror the beast began moaning and groaning in a dreadfully human manner.

But the fight was nearly over. The warriors rushed in and thrust again and again into the quivering body until it ceased to move.

Full Moon danced with joy.

"We will eat him!" she cried, laughing in Ginger's face.

"You can—but not me," declared Ginger, who was nearly sick at the thought. "Phew, what a brute! I think I'll go back and join the others."

Leaving Full Moon helping to cut up the carcass, he retreated through the gathering twilight to the house. But before he could describe his adventure a tattooed warrior came racing down the hill towards them.

"Atanelli, he come!" he cried.

"He means Castanelli," declared Sandy. "We'd better go and hear the news."

**(With Castanelli arriving on the scene it looks as if trouble is brewing! Make sure you read the next exciting chapters of this thrilling serial. Place that standing order for the GEM to-day.)**

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