

"THE SECRET WITNESS!"

**GRIPPING
ST. JIM'S STORY—**

INSIDE.

THE **GEM** 2^D





Blake Answers Back!

Jack Blake's here to answer your letters and deal with your queries. Write to him at The GEM, Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4. Be as candid as you like. Blake likes a plain speaker, being by nature a John Bull himself! But keep your letters SHORT.

Miss R. P. B., of Bucks, writes:

I'm not so very keen on boys, but I like and respect my favourites: Tom Merry, Roylance, Olive, Talbot, Fatty Wynn, and yourself. Will you tell them?

ANSWER: I told them and I told me. Me was delighted, and so was them. I say, aren't us getting a bit mixed somewhere? Never mind!

Yvonne Turner, of Woodford Green, Essex, writes:

What does "the repose that stamps the caste of Vere de Vere" mean? Is Monty Lowther popular? Tell Cardew he's my favourite.

ANSWER: It means Gussy can't help looking upstage sometimes. He's funny that way. Lowther says I'm to tell you he has never been popular. Humourists are never popular; people always groan at them, but the moment they are absent the same people complain things seem dull! I'm telling Cardew, but I'm sure he'll be too bored to learn he's anybody's favourite!

Johnnie Cope, of Moss Side, Manchester, writes: Do the Seaforth Highlanders wear kilts?

ANSWER: I hope so, old chap. Dashed draughty if they don't!

J. Smith, of Highbury, N.5, writes:

Name from Tom Merry downwards the twelve best scrappers in the Lower School.

ANSWER: Tom Merry, Talbot, Blake (yes, me!), Noble, Roylance, Grundy (who just looked in appropriately), Gussy, Figgins, Lumley-Lumley, Durrance, Julian, Levison. This, of course, omits about one hundred fellows who think they ought to be in such a list. Trimble would head the list Trimble, and continue it Trimble, Trimble, Trimble, and so on. That reminds me, I was going to kick Trimble for upsetting the ink over my "copy"?

"Amateur Boxer," of Rochdale, Lancs, writes:

Tell Tom Merry I'll put him out for the count any time at boxing!

ANSWER: I told him all right, but he never even wilted. So what?

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Jack Gee, of Swinton, Lancs, writes:

Why doesn't D'Arey smack his minor Wally is cheeky?

ANSWER: Golly, if Wally should ever catch sight of your letter he'd blush to the roots of his hair, and—well, he'd "smack" back soon. P.S.—Think I'd better hide your letter somewhere deep!

A. Y. Z. Norman Roberts, of Warrington, S. Wales, writes:

How are you, mun bach? How many nationalities at St. Jim's? My favourites: Ten, Three, Fortified Four (that's you!), Fatty Figgins, Levison. Do you go sparking? Another unprinted one? I hope not. Any other P.S.—I'm a left-hander. Any at St. Jim's record: 176 not out. Howzat?

ANSWER: Yorkshire extends Wales here. Nationalities: Kerr (Scotch), Wynn (Wales), Drake (Canada), Olive (South Africa), Rao (India), Kildare, Reilly, Mulvaney (Irish), Noble (Australia), Buck Finn (U.S.A.), Keble (Isle of Man). Now, what—oh, what, is "sparking"? Sparkling, maybe? This page is intended to be sparkling. I leave you to judge. No left-handers in junior eleven. Figgins whacked off against a rather weak village eleven last season. Hundreds aren't very frequent against good ones of course. Yours for a "century"!

A. D., of Birmingham 22, writes:

Is the gold challenge cup mine? An English word with twenty-eight letters—ANTI-ESTABLISHMENTARIANISM. How old is your oldest junior?

ANSWER: Wow! You and 2,345 others read that word by the same post. It's a good one, but think of my eyesight! I'm needing several pairs of specs to help me out with the mathematical miracles of wordiness! Oldest inhabitant of the passage is actually Talbot—sixteen years and a month. Tom Merry and Grundy are both sixteen. Wonderful how some of us still manage to learn about, isn't it?

MERRY'S ENEMY STRIKES AT HIM AGAIN—AND TOM IS UNABLE TO PROVE HIMSELF INNOCENT OF INSULTING HIS FORM-MASTER!



The SECRET WITNESS!

Tom Merry blinked in astonishment as he looked through the keyhole of the cupboard door. Mr. Silverson was leaning over the table, writing on Tom Merry's Latin paper. Tom Merry would have been still more astonished if he could have seen what the Fourth Form master was writing!

A SLIGHT MISAPPREHENSION!

"Mind that worm!" exclaimed Tom Merry. James Silverson, master of the Fourth Form at St. Jim's, gave a start, almost

as he was walking on the path under the elms in the morning break.

Whether Tom Merry and Manners and Lowther were as they came trotting along that path he did not know—till Tom Merry spoke.

Of course, he knew!

It was a chilly December morning. There had been rain, and the earth was damp, but the rain, to the satisfaction of the St. Jim's fellows, had cleared the air before the bell rang for break.

For two hours in the Fourth Form Room with Mr. Silverson, Tom Merry and his chums were engaged in a trot round the

quadrangle, getting a spot of fresh air. Side by side they came swinging along the path under the elms, filling that path to its full width.

As Mr. Silverson was on that path, ahead of them, they naturally had to "mind" him as soon as they saw him, or else run him down. But, in point of fact, the chums of the Shell had not yet observed him when Tom Merry uttered that sudden exclamation, and the three slowed down.

James Silverson had no doubt that they had!

For James knew only too well that his nickname at St. Jim's was the "Worm." Hardly a fellow in the Lower School spoke of Silverson by his name—it was always the Worm. School House and New House, who seldom agreed on anything else, agreed that that name fitted Silverson to a hair. And Silverson, who had a quiet and stealthy way of walking

**GRAND NEW LONG YARN
OF YOUR
ST. JIM'S FAVOURITES
by
MARTIN CLIFFORD**

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about unheard, had naturally not been long in overhearing his nickname.

It was not pleasant to be nicknamed the Worm. The fact that the name fitted him did not make it agreeable.

Only that morning James had caned Arthur Augustus D'Arcy of his Form for speaking of somebody—he could guess whom—as the Worm. Only the day before he had given Baggy Trimble six for the same offence.

He could not give Shell fellows six. But he was not likely to let such an offence pass—especially when it came from Tom Merry, upon whom his dislike was bitterly concentrated.

As the three Shell fellows slowed in their run Silverson strode towards them, his face flaming.

Other juniors alluded to the Worm out of his hearing, or when they did not know he was within hearing. This was the first time that he had been called the Worm practically to his face. Even a good-tempered man could not have liked it. And James Silverson was far from good-tempered.

"Merry, you insolent young rascal!" he thundered.

Tom Merry was looking at the ground, but as James thundered at him he looked up.

And he stared.

Judging by his look, he had not noticed Mr. Silverson before, and did not know why he was breaking out like this.

"Did you speak to me, Mr. Silverson?" he asked.

"You know I did, you young scoundrel!"

"Then don't call me such names, please!" said Tom coolly. "I don't like it, and I won't stand it."

"Hear, hear!" said Monty Lowther.

"What on earth's the matter?" exclaimed Manners.

Mr. Silverson took no notice of Lowther or Manners. His eyes fixed on Tom Merry.

"I heard what you said, Merry!" he breathed.

"Did you?" said Tom indifferently. "Well, what about it?"

"Follow me at once! I shall take you to your Form-master—"

"You won't, Mr. Silverson!" said Tom. "Break's too short to follow you anywhere. You can report me to Mr. Linton, if you like, if you've got anything to report. Is anything the matter?"

James made a movement as if he would take the Shell fellow by the collar. Tom's eyes glinted and he clenched his hands.

"Will you obey my order?" snapped James.

"No!" retorted Tom. "You've no right to give me orders; Mr. Linton has told you so, and I've told you more than once."

"If you were in my Form—" breathed James. Tom Merry laughed.

"I'm glad I'm not!" he answered. "There's Mr. Linton in the quad, if you want to speak to him—though what the matter is I haven't the faintest idea. What am I supposed to have done this time?"

James Silverson did not answer that. He glanced round. Mr. Linton, the master of the Shell, was walking sedately at a little distance, in company with Mr. Railton, Housemaster of the School House. James called, or, rather, barked:

"Mr. Linton!"

The master of the Shell glanced round, surprised to hear his name called, or, rather, shouted in the quadrangle.

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"Will you step here, please?" hooted James. Mr. Linton and Mr. Railton changed direction and came towards the spot together. Both of them frowned a little, indicating approval of angry excitement in the face of the master. James, when his temper was raised as it very often was—seldom remembered appearances.

"Well?" said Mr. Linton coldly.

"What is the matter, Mr. Silverson?" asked the Housemaster.

The Terrible Three stood in a group. Little as James guessed it, they did not know what the matter was, unless this was merely an outbreak of bad temper on Silverson's part caused by his dislike of that distant relative of his—Tom Merry of the Shell.

"The matter is this, sir," said James, choking. "I have been treated with the greatest insolence by this boy Merry! If he were in my Form I should cane him; as he is in your Form, Mr. Linton, I demand—"

"Merry, if you have been insolent to Mr. Silverson—"

"I have not, sir!" said Tom. "I don't even know what he is driving at! I did not even see him till he spoke to me."

"That is false!" snapped James.

"What has Merry done?" exclaimed Mr. Linton impatiently.

"He has called me, sir, by an insulting name!" hooted the master of the Fourth. "His nickname, I have no doubt, was invented by him. He has dared to call me by that nickname to my face!"

Tom Merry and Manners and Lowther looked at him.

"Merry," exclaimed Mr. Railton, "you—"

"But I have not, sir!" exclaimed Tom. "Mr. Silverson must have fancied it! I never spoke to him at all till he addressed me—"

"You hear this boy!" breathed James. "Such untruthfulness—"

"Will you tell me precisely what Merry said?" asked Mr. Linton.

"I will, sir! The nickname he used—the insulting nickname—was the Worm!" panted James.

"That is the nickname, sir, by which this boy of your Form dared to address a master in the school."

Mr. Linton's face became very stern.

"Merry, you have ventured—you have dared to—"

"Oh crikey!" gasped Tom Merry. He understood all of a sudden. "No, sir! Mr. Silverson is mistaken—"

"How dare you say so?" thundered Mr. Silverson. "Mr. Linton, Mr. Railton, these three boys were running towards me on this path, and Merry called out, loud enough for me to hear him: 'Mind that worm!'"

James's face was burning with rage. He did not like that nickname, and he did not like repeating it! But he had to if Tom Merry was to be called to account for it.

To his surprise and rage the Terrible Three burst into a roar.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Merry—Manners—Lowther!" exclaimed Mr. Railton angrily.

"Oh! Sorry, sir!" gasped Tom Merry, checking back his merriment. "Mr. Silverson is mistaken, sir! I never saw him—I never mentioned him! Ha, ha!"

"You admit having used the words Mr. Silverson has repeated!" snapped Mr. Linton.

"Oh! Yes, sir!" gasped Tom. "But I—I can't speak of Mr. Silverson, sir! I was only warning my friends not to tread on that worm."

"Wha-a-t?"

Tom Merry pointed to a small object that was wriggling across the damp path. It was a worm! The rain had brought out more than one worm, and that worm had been in danger of being crushed out of existence when Tom had spotted it on the path and warned his friends to "mind the worm." They had stopped in time to save the worm's life.

Mr. Linton and Mr. Railton stared at the wriggling worm. James Silverson stared at it, his face, already red, becoming absolutely scarlet. "Bless my soul!" ejaculated Mr. Linton. Mr. Railton passed his hand over his mouth, which was twitching.

"I—I was speaking of Mr. Silverson, sir!" gasped Tom. "I never saw him. That was the worm I was speaking of, sir."

James Silverson looked at him. He looked at the worm again. He looked at the two others. Then he walked away.

His ears could be seen burning crimson as he went. James now appeared to be chiefly anxious to get out of sight.

"Oh!" gasped Mr. Linton. "This—this means to be a—a misapprehension. You—you boys may—may go!"

Tom Merry and Manners and Lowther, carefully avoiding the worm, resumed their trot. A gleam of laughter floated back as they trotted. Mr. Linton looked at Mr. Railton. The House-master looked at Mr. Linton. Both gurgled, unable to help it, burst into a laugh.

Which, perhaps, was very pleasant for James Silverson to hear as he hurriedly departed.

BAGGING BAGGY!

CRUNCH!

Monty Lowther of the St. Jim's Shell gave quite a jump.

Crunch! It was quite an unexpected sound as he came to his study one afternoon a few days later—Wednesday, and a half-holiday.

Monty had left his chums, Tom Merry and Manners, at the foot of the staircase, waiting for him when he ran up to the study. So, naturally, he did not expect to find anybody in Study No. 10.

But as he pushed open the door, that unexpected sound fell upon his ears, showing that somebody was there. It sounded rather like an emptying fodder; but Monty, of course, could suppose that an ox had got loose in the Shell House in the School House.

Braun-n-u-nch!

The next moment he saw what it was as he stepped into the study.

There was a cupboard in that study—a tall cupboard in the wall that extended from floor to ceiling.

Half-way up in that cupboard was a wide shelf. That shelf was used as a larder by the occupants of Study No. 10. Below it, in the lower half of the cupboard, various lumber was packed.

The cupboard door was wide open. Standing on the shelf, inside the cupboard, was a rotund figure.

Monty had a back view of it, but the ample lines told whose it was. It was Baggy, the stable boy of the Fourth Form.

It was from Baggy that the crunching sound proceeded.

Baggy had a tin of biscuits open on the shelf. His fat paws were groping in that tin, conveying biscuit after biscuit to his wide mouth. His podgy jaws seemed to have hit on the secret of perpetual motion. They munched and crunched without a pause.

Monty Lowther looked at him. He stepped quietly into the study. He approached Trimble noiselessly from behind.

Baggy did not turn his head. He was deeply interested in biscuits. Evidently he did not intend to quit while a biscuit remained in the tin. He stood there bolting biscuits, oblivious of all else.

Monty drew back his foot.

His first idea was to surprise the tuck-hunter

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of the Fourth with a tremendous kick on his plump trousers.

But second thoughts, which are said to be the best, supervened. Lowther lowered his foot without landing it on the fat Baggy.

Silently he stepped a little nearer, and took hold of the open cupboard door.

Baggy was right inside the cupboard as he stood at the shelf. A kick on his plump trousers would, no doubt, have surprised him. But the sudden slamming of the cupboard door would probably be a greater surprise.

Crunch!

Baggy seemed to be enjoying life. No doubt, having seen the Terrible Three of the Shell go down to go out, he supposed that they were gone, and had weighed in at once to improve the shining hour. Rather unfortunately for him, Monty had run up to the study at the last moment; and here he was, just behind Baggy, unseen, unheard, unsuspected!

Monty Lowther grinned cheerily. Grasping the cupboard door, he swung it shut with a sudden slam.

Slam!

"Oh!" came a startled gasp from the fat Baggy in the cupboard.

Click!

Lowther turned the key in the cupboard lock; then he jerked it out, and slipped it into his pocket.

From the interior of the cupboard came a roar. "Oh jiminy! I say, who's that? I say, lemme out of this! Is that you, Tom Merry, you swab?"

Thump! on the cupboard door from within.

"Lemme out!" roared Trimble. "Is that

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Manners? Manners, you rotter, you let me out of this, will you?"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Monty Lowther.

Bang! Thump!

"I say, you've locked this door! Is that that funny idiot Lowther? Let me out of this cupboard, you funny idiot!"

"Don't you like the biscuits?" asked Monty cheerily. "I thought you were rather keen on them. You can finish them if you like, and the tin, too, if you fancy it. You'll have plenty of time this afternoon."

"I wasn't scoffing your biscuits!" roared Trimble. "I—I was—was just looking at them."

"Go on looking at them! You'll know them by sight by the time you get out of that cupboard!"

"Will you let me out?" roared Trimble.

"Certainly—when I come in!" chortled Monty Lowther. "I'm going out now, but I expect to be in for tea—"

"Tea!" yelled Trimble. "Why, it's hours to tea! Do you think you're going to keep me sticking this till tea?"

"Sort of," agreed Monty.

"I'll yell for help!" shrieked the alarmed Baggy. "I'll bring all the House here, you swab!"

"I don't mind; bring all the House, and the New House as well, if you like! Nobody's got a key to that cupboard!"

"Oh jiminy! I—I say, Lowther, old chap, let me out! I've got some lines to do for Silverson!"

"That's rather sad," agreed Lowther. "Silverson will have to wait for those lines."

"I can't keep Silverson waiting!" wailed Baggy. "You know what a beast Silverson is! He will give me six! You know what a rotten temper Silverson's got. He's waiting for those lines now."

"And you were keeping him waiting while you scoffed those biscuits? Do you call that respectful to your Form-master?"

"I—I mean, I've got to take the lines in—in half an hour!" howled Baggy. "Silverson's awfully particular about his lines."

"Not so particular as I am about my biscuits."

Thump! Bang!

"Good-bye, old grampus! Remind me to let you out when I come in to tea," said Monty Lowther. "If I may make a suggestion, you can spend the afternoon thinking over what a rotten mean thing it is to bag a fellow's tuck!"

"Oh, you rotter! Will you lemme out!"

"Yes; at tea-time."

"Help!" roared Trimble.

"Go it!" said Monty Lowther encouragingly. "If you bring a beak or a prefect up here, you can tell him what you were doing in a fellow's study cupboard."

"You silly idiot—"

"Good-bye!"

Monty Lowther, with the key in his pocket, strolled out of the study, and shut the study door after him.

Baggy Trimble was left to finish the biscuits—if so disposed. But with the prospect of a couple of hours' imprisonment before him, it was probable that even the fat Baggy had lost his appetite.

He thumped on the inside of the cupboard door, and howled and yelled. But answer there came none. He squinted at last from the cup-

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board keyhole, and discerned that the study was empty. Monty Lowther was gone.

"Oh jiminy!" gasped Baggy.

He sat on a box in the cupboard and grumbled. It was quite some little time before he found comfort in finishing the biscuits.

SAVING GUSSY!

"WHAT'S that?"

Tom Merry and Manners asked the question together as Arthur Augustus D'Arcy of the Fourth Form came down the stairs.

The two Shell fellows were waiting for Monty Lowther.

It was a half-holiday at St. Jim's that day, and the Terrible Three, like a good many of St. Jim's fellows, were going over to Abbotsford to see a display at the air camp there. It was a good distance to Abbotsford, and they were late to be late back for tea, and Monty Lowther had thoughtfully suggested taking a supply of biscuits in their coat pockets, for refreshment while they watched the thrilling stunts of the R.A.F.

So Tom Merry and Harry Manners hung about while Lowther cut up to the study for that supply of biscuits, of which the Terrible Three were fortunate enough to possess half a tin of genuine Huntley & Palmer's—or, rather, of which they had been fortunate enough to possess a supply before Trimble of the Fourth got busy in Study No. 4.

D'Arcy of the Fourth came down the stairs with a cheery grin on his face, and something under his arm.

That something very special was on, the next casual glance at Arthur Augustus' speaking countenance would have revealed.

What was under his arm looked like blotting-paper. But its stiffness showed that there was cardboard inside the blotting-paper.

The blotting-paper, in fact, was camouflage. Something was hidden inside, and Tom and Manners inquired what it was. Gussy's grinning visage indicated that there was some tremendous joke on.

"Wait a moment, deah boys!" said Gussy.

And he glanced up and down and round about through his eyeglass. He seemed to want to make sure that the coast was clear before he revealed the hidden object in the blotting-paper.

Mr. Linton, the master of the Shell, came from the quad with Railton, the School House master. As they passed on in the direction of their studies, Arthur Augustus slipped the blotting-paper behind him. He kept it there all the two masters were out of sight.

"What the dickens—" exclaimed Tom Merry, considerably mystified by this mysterious proceeding.

"I don't want a beak to see this, deah boys," murmured Arthur Augustus. "If a beak happened to spot it Silverson would spot me."

"Silverson?" repeated Tom.

"Have you seen that wat about?" asked Arthur Augustus.

"Silverson's in the quad," said Manners. "What?"

"That's all wight, then. A fellow can catch his studay if he's in the quad," said Arthur Augustus, with satisfaction. "It will wait until the wat when he finds this on his study table."

"But what—"

"Look!" grinned Arthur Augustus.

opened the folded blotting-paper and read the sheet of cardboard within. Tom and Manners stared at it.

pen-and-ink drawing was on the cardboard. The drawing was not fearfully good. Gussy was an artist. Still, the picture, such as it was, expressed its meaning clearly enough.

The figure in cap and gown, obviously intended to represent a Form-master, was depicted in the process of being kicked out of a doorway by a large boot. The boot was there on its own, and speak, and merely placed in the picture to make it clear that the figure was being kicked

Gussy had not been able to catch a likeness, there was no doubt that the kicked-out figure was intended to represent Mr. Silverson, the master of the Fourth Form, because one eye was drawn in deep black to suggest a black eye. Mr. Silverson, a week ago, had bagged an accidental black eye, which was still a deep purple and very noticeable.

This figure in Gussy's drawing evidently was Mr. Silverson.

Under the drawing was an inscription in capital letters:

WHAT WILL HAPPEN WHEN THE HEAD KNOWS WHAT A ROTTER YOU ARE!

Tom Merry and Manners blinked at that. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy grinned at them, apparently expecting merriment and amusement.

"Wathah a knock at that wat—what?" said Mr. Augustus. "Of course, he knows that we have him in the Fourth. Every man in the school would give a week's pocket-money to see Lathom come back and that wat cleah off. It looks as if we have got to stand him till he weak up for Chwistmas. But it's some consolation to wag the wottah—what?"

"You're going to stick that in Silverson's face!" ejaculated Manners.

"Yes, wathah!"

"My dear chap—" murmured Tom Merry. "I will make the wat feahfully wild!" said Arthur Augustus. "It's quite true, too. Head would fish him out if he knew what a fish he was."

"But he doesn't," said Tom. "Gussy, old man, fearfully funny, but I'd keep that for the school, if I were you. Don't plant it on Silverson."

"I have spent an hour on that dwawin' specially for Silverson. I have let Blake and Hewwies dig go off to Abbotsford without me specially to get it done. And I am jollay well goin' to stick it on Silverson, and let the wat know what I think of him!" said Arthur Augustus emphatically.

"It will mean an awful row," said Manners.

"Let it!" said Arthur Augustus cheerfully. "The wat won't know that I put it there! Let me wage and woad, the wottah!"

"Then to one you'll be spotted, old man," said

Manners.

"Nabish!"

"Silverson may come in any minute."

"Then I had better hurry up."

"Look here, old chap—" urged Tom.

"It's all wight, deah boy," said Arthur

Augustus reassuringly. "You fellows wag

Silverson, but you nevah seem to realise that

waggin' the wat is safah in the hands of a fellow of tact and judgment. It's quite all wight."

"If Silverson spots you—"

"He won't. I shall just stwoll along Mastah's Studies, dwop into the wat's studah, and leave this on his table, and be back in three minutes. It's all wight."

"But—"

"Wats, old chap!"

And Arthur Augustus, with his picture camouflaged in blotting-paper under his noble arm, walked on, and turned the corner into Masters' passage, leaving his friends feeling very dubious and uneasy.

"Oh, my hat!" breathed Manners. "The Worm!"

Tom caught his breath.

Mr. Silverson, the master of the Fourth, came in by the big doorway on the quad.

He glanced at Tom Merry as he entered—a glance of dislike; the Worm could never see Tom without looking as if he would like to bite him.

For Silverson and his black looks Tom did not care a straw. He hardly noticed James Silverson's black look or black eye. Silverson was going in—and only that moment Gussy had turned the corner! Silverson was going to cop Gussy in his study, placing that disrespectful picture on his table! There was not the slightest doubt about that. Silverson would walk into his study almost on Gussy's heels!

Tom Merry had no time to think about it. All he knew was that the Worm was not going, if he could help it, to catch the hapless Gussy in the very act and handle the cane on him with his usual ruthless severity—or rather more than usual, in the circumstances. Tom acted without thinking.

Leaving Manners, he made a rush at the doorway, and, as if not seeing Mr. Silverson coming in, crashed right into the master of the Fourth.

"Oh crumbs!" gasped Manners, taken as much by surprise by that sudden action of his chum as James Silverson was.

"Oh!" roared Mr. Silverson.

He went spinning, and crashed down in the doorway with a heavy bump. Tom Merry, reeling from the shock, stood panting, staring at him as he sat.

TOUGH FOR TOM!

JAMES SILVERSON sat and spluttered.

He seemed hardly able to believe what had happened—and, indeed, he hardly could.

Ever since he had been at St. Jim's the new master of the Fourth had been on Tom Merry's trail, and more trouble had been packed into that term than Tom had ever known before. On James' side, at least, they were rivals for a fortune, and James' one aim at St. Jim's was to pile trouble on his schoolboy rival. Often, by sheer cunning, had he made Tom appear to be in the wrong; but this time cunning was not needed—Tom, for once, seemed to be hunting trouble on his own account.

Barging a master headlong over was rather a serious matter, and that was what Tom had done without even a hint of provocation, except for a black look.

James, who had often taken a great deal of trouble to provoke Tom's temper into reckless action, had not needed to provoke him this time.

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He sat up and spluttered, and gazed up at the captain of the Shell in as much amazement as rage.

"You—you—" he gasped.

"Oh crumbs!" breathed Manners, in dismay. He understood after a moment why Tom had done it, but that did not make it less serious.

"Oh, my hat!" came a startled exclamation from the staircase.

Monty Lowther was coming down.

Monty's little jest on Trimble in Study No. 10 had rather delayed his return. He came without the biscuits; Baggy had had the biscuits! He came down in time to see Tom charge the master of the Fourth over in the House doorway.

James staggered to his feet.

His face was crimson with rage—except for the black circle round his eye.

"Merry! You—you—" he stuttered, in fury.

"Sorry, sir!" said Tom politely.

That was true enough. He was sorry that he had had to barge James over to save Arthur Augustus from what was coming to him. He had some unpleasant consequences to expect for himself.

He was sorry he had had to do it, but he was not sorry that he had done it. Whatever he got from Mr. Linton, his Form-master, for having done it would be little compared with what Gussy would have got from Silverson if the Worm had caught him with that picture in his study. James was not merely a severe master, he was hard and cruel, and poor old Gussy would have had the time of his life.

"Sorry, are you?" said James Silverson, between his teeth. "If you were in my Form—" He broke off, choking with rage. "I shall take you to your Form-master. Come!"

"Very well, sir," said Tom quietly.

"Bai Jove! What's the mattah, deah boy?" Arthur Augustus came out of Masters' passage and started a little as he saw his Form-master. He realised that he had cut it very fine. "Tom Mewwy, old chap, what—"

"Follow me, Merry!" roared James.

He stalked away to Mr. Linton's study, followed by the captain of the Shell. Manners and Lowther stood looking after them in dismay.

James banged rather than knocked at Mr. Linton's door, and pitched it open.

The master of the Shell, having come in from a walk in the quad, had settled down comfortably in an armchair. He did not look pleased when James Silverson stalked into his study with Tom at his heels.

He rose to his feet, compressing his lips.

Mr. Linton was tired of James' incessant reports and complaints of that member of his Form. He had come to the conclusion that Mr. Silverson disliked that distant relative of his—which was correct—and he had gone so far as to request Mr. Silverson to mind his own business and keep clear of the Shell.

Now, it seemed, there was to be more of it, and Mr. Linton had no doubt that the trouble, whatever it was, was as frivolous as before, and due chiefly to Mr. Silverson's dislike of his school-boy relative. He had had enough of it, and he did not wait for James to speak.

"Is this another complaint concerning Merry, Mr. Silverson?" he rapped.

"Yes, sir, it is!" panted James.

"Then kindly do not waste my time!" rapped the master of the Shell.

"What?" roared James.

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"I have told you, sir, and more than once, that I am tired of hearing complaints, generally unjustified, about this boy of my Form," he claimed Mr. Linton tartly. "I have requested you, sir, to keep your distance from boys of my Form, and not to concern yourself about them. You are wasting my time and your own." Silverson.

James almost foamed.

"Is a master in this school, sir, to be knocked headlong by a disrespectful boy?" he spluttered. "Is a master to be knocked spinning in the way?"

"If that is what has occurred, Mr. Silverson—"

"That is what has occurred!" bawled James.

"Then I have no doubt that it was an accident—"

"It was no accident!" James almost shrieked. "The boy himself will not dare to say that it was an accident."

Mr. Linton compressed his lips harder. It dawned on him that for once James Silverson was, perhaps, making a justified complaint. There was a very disconcerting reflection after what he had said to the master of the Fourth.

It was clear, at least, that this was not a case of an absurd misapprehension, like the affair of the worm a few days ago.

"Was this an accident or not, Merry?" rapped Mr. Linton sharply.

"It was not!" roared James. "The boy deliberately rushed into me—the most deliberate action, sir!"

"Will you let the boy speak, Mr. Silverson?"

"If you listen, sir, to this boy's falsehoods, I will take the matter to the Housemaster!"

"Let Merry speak!" rapped Mr. Linton.

"Merry, answer me at once. Was this an accident or not?"

Tom breathed rather hard.

"No, sir!" he answered quietly.

James stared at him. Like many unversatile persons, James found it difficult to believe that others were more truthful than himself. He never could have understood that Tom Mewwy would not have lied to save himself from a dressing. Mr. Linton, who judged better, expected a truthful answer, and got one.

He knitted his brows. This was rather awkward for Mr. Linton after his remarks when Silverson entered. It concentrated his anger on Tom.

"Merry," he exclaimed, "am I to understand that you deliberately knocked over a member of Dr. Holmes' staff?"

"I barged into Mr. Silverson, sir," said Tom. "I should not have done so to any other member in this school."

"You hear him!" spluttered James. "Tom hear him!"

"I hear him, Mr. Silverson," said the master of the Shell coldly. "There is no excuse for Merry's action—"

"I am glad to hear you say so!" snarled James.

"I shall deal with this boy, sir, as he deserves," said Mr. Linton. He picked up a cane from the table. "Merry, bend over that chair!"

Tom Merry bent over the chair and took his seat in silence. It was a sufficiently severe punishment, though nothing like what Arthur Augustus would have received from Silverson had not Tom saved the swell of St. Jim's from discovery.

Mr. Linton laid down the cane. But he was not finished yet. All the more because he was irritated by the fact that Silverson was this time

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justified, he was intensely angry with the junior, who was, admittedly, in the wrong.

"You will be detained in the House this afternoon, Merry," he said icily. "I will prepare a Latin paper, which you may take to your study. I shall expect it to be completed by tea-time. You may wait here."

He glanced at James.

"I trust you are satisfied, Mr. Silverson," he said.

James gave a grunt which did not clearly indicate whether he was satisfied or not, and stalked out of the study.

"May I speak to my friends, sir?" asked Tom.

"You may not!" answered Mr. Linton coldly.

"They are waiting for me, sir, to go out."

"Then you may speak to them and return to your study," Mr. Linton was very angry and annoyed, but he was not inconsiderate. "Return once."

"Thank you, sir!"

Tom Merry left the study to speak to Manners and Lowther. He was back in hardly more than a minute, and for the next quarter of an hour he sat in silence, and waited while his Form-master prepared the Latin paper which was to occupy him that afternoon while his friends were gone to Abbotsford to watch the airmen.

KICKING OVER THE TRACES!

BANG!

"Lemme out!"

Tom Merry jumped.

He came into his study, No. 10 in the Shell, with his Latin paper in his hand and a dark frown on his face.

He shut the door with rather a slam, and threw the paper on the table. But he did not sit down on it. He had not made up his mind whether he was going to sit down to that paper or not. He was, in fact, in an angry and rebellious mood, and very much inclined to walk out of the House and the school, and let Mr. Linton do what he pleased about it afterwards.

That sudden outbreak from the study cupboard took him by surprise.

He had had only a few words with his chums before he went back to Mr. Linton, and they started for Abbotsford without him. So, as Monty Lowther had not mentioned it, he was unaware of Baggy Trimble's imprisonment in the study cupboard. He jumped in his astonishment, and stared at the cupboard door, on which a fat was banging from within.

"Who the dickens is that?" he exclaimed.

"Lemme out!" howled Trimble. "I know it's you, Tom Merry. I can see you through the chole."

"Is that Trimble?" exclaimed Tom, recognising the voice. "You piffing idiot, what are you doing there?"

"Ask Lowther for the key, you swab, and let me out!"

"Lowther! He's gone to Abbotsford."

Yell from Trimble.

"Oh, the rotter! Has he taken the key with him?"

"I suppose so, if he had it. Are you locked in your fat image? What the thump are you doing at all for?" exclaimed Tom.

"I—I was just looking into the cupboard, and that brute came in quietly and slammed the door on me!" groaned Trimble. "I wasn't scoffing the biscuits. He may have fancied I was!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Tom Merry. He understood what had happened now, and that this was Monty's playful idea of giving the tuck-hunter of the School House a lesson.

"Will you lemme out?" shrieked Trimble.

"How can I, fathead, if Lowther's got the key?" asked Tom, laughing. "He's a mile on the way to Abbotsford now with Manners."

"Go after him on your bike!" implored Trimble. "Make him give you the key! I can't stay here! You see that? Go after him. Oh jiminy! I thought you were all gone out, or I wouldn't have come to the study at all! I say, I'm jolly glad you came up, Merry—but go after Lowther now—"

"I can't, fathead! I'm detained!"

"Oh, don't gammon—cut after that beast Lowther—"

"I've got a Latin paper to do, fathead, and I'm gated till tea," answered Tom. "I've had Linton down on me."

"You're the fellow to get into rows, ain't you?" snorted Trimble. "You've been in rows all the term—with your Housemaster and Form-master, and even with my Form-master, as well as the Head! Well, look here, you can jolly well cut—it won't be the first time! I jolly well know you cut last time Linton gave you a detention! Well, cut this time."

"Fathead!" answered Tom.

"You won't mind another row, old chap!" urged Trimble persuasively through the cupboard keyhole. "You like rows! Look how you keep on rowing and ragging! You've been jolly near the sack more than once this term! Well, another row won't hurt you."

"Idiot!"

"Will you get after that brute Lowther?" roared Baggy.

"I don't know," answered Tom. "But if I do, I shan't come back with the key, you howling ass! Serve you jolly well right to be stuck in the cupboard—it will teach you to leave fellows' grub alone, perhaps."

"Look here—"

"Oh, shut up!" said Tom impatiently. "I can't let you out—and I don't know that I would if I could. You've asked for it, and got it—make the best of it!"

"Blow you!" roared Trimble.

Thump! came a terrific knock on the cupboard door. It was followed by a yell.

"Ow! Ow! Ow!"

"What's the matter now?" exclaimed Tom.

"Ow! I've hurt my knuckles—wow!"

"Better leave that door alone, then!"

"Yah! Rotter! Ow!"

Tom Merry gave no more heed to the hapless Baggy. As he had said, he could not let the prisoner out, the key being in Monty Lowther's pocket a mile away. And a fellow who parked himself in a study cupboard to pilfer tuck deserved to be locked in and booted into the bargain. Baggy was getting what he deserved, and he could like it or lump it.

Tom fixed his eyes on the Latin paper lying on the table.

He noted, with a bitter smile, that it was a tough paper to handle. His Form-master had given him some hard work to do.

If he did that paper it would keep him hard at work till tea-time; a dreary enough half-holiday.

And it was a day that fairly called a fellow

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out of doors. December as it was, it was bright and dry and sunny, with a nip of frost in the air that made it all the more enticing.

Almost everybody was out of doors. A crowd of fellows had gone over to Abbotsford to watch the airmen do their stunts; others were skating on the frozen Rhyl; and on Big Side a senior football match was going on. Even Racke and Crooke, the slackers of the Shell, had gone out—even Skimpole had walked forth with a heavy volume under his arm. There was not a footstep to be heard about the studies; and not a voice, except Baggy Trimble's from the cupboard.

Turning from the Latin paper, Tom stepped to the window. He looked out into clear, frosty sunshine, with the window wide open.

Below, in the quad, there were a few figures to be seen, but almost everybody seemed to be out of gates.

On one figure Tom's eyes turned with a gleam in them. It was that of Mr. Silverson.

As if he guessed that eyes were on him, Silverson looked up as Tom looked down. He gave the captain of the Shell a long look and walked on. No doubt he could guess how little inclined the junior was to stick in a study on that bright afternoon, while all his friends were absent, working at a weary, dreary Latin exercise.

Tom gave him a dark look as he went.

His mishap that afternoon was due to his own action, certainly, in saving Arthur Augustus D'Arcy from bad trouble. Nevertheless, it was all James Silverson's fault.

Arthur Augustus was the last fellow in the world to rag a master. His view of such things was that they were bad form. He made an exception only in Silverson's favour—because the Worm asked for it over and over again. Silverson was a hard-handed tyrant in his Form-room—his own Form loathed him as much as Tom Merry did.

Gussy's rag was Silverson's fault. And had he caught Gussy with that picture in his study, the punishment would have been out of all proportion to the fault. Tom did not blame himself in the least for having intervened as he had done.

He could not expect Mr. Linton, of course, to look at the matter as he did. Nevertheless, taking the view that James was to blame for the whole affair, he was not disposed to resign himself to what—whether Linton knew it or not—was an undeserved punishment.

He had had 'six. That was enough. Detention over and above was laying it on too thick! And Tom suspected that that extra severity was chiefly due to Mr. Linton's annoyance at finding that Silverson was in the right for once! A precious reason for a fellow to stick in a study on a half-holiday; he told himself bitterly.

For ten minutes or more Tom Merry stood at the window, thinking it out—unheeding a squealing voice from the study cupboard.

Then at last he made up his mind.

He had not touched that Latin paper. He was not going to touch it. If he did not take it to Linton at tea-time, Linton, no doubt, would come up to his study after it—and if he did, he could find it lying on the table, untouched. If it meant a row, let it mean a row—and that was that!

Tom crossed to the door.

"I say!" came a squeal from the study cupboard.

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board. Apparently an eye was at the cupboard keyhole. "I say, don't you go without me out. I say—Tom Merry, you rotter—say—Oh, you swab!"

The study door banged after Tom Merry. Five minutes later Tom was dropping a back window; and a few minutes after he was scudding along the lane to Abbotsford to join his friends there!

The die was cast!

MYSTERIOUS!

BAGGY TRIMBLE groaned.

Really, it was awful for Baggy.

He had been the best part of an hour in that awful cupboard. Had Baggy hated anything of the kind—had he dreamed of it—wild horses would not have dragged him into Study No. 10 that afternoon.

It was the severest lesson Baggy had ever received on the subject of tuck-hunting in fellows' studies!

Probably it would have the effect of clearing him clear of Study No. 10 in future tuck-hunts. So far as that went, Monty Lowther's bright with Baggy was quite an efficacious one.

But it was awful, it was fearful, for Baggy. He had finished the biscuits; but there was no comfort in biscuits in this awful situation.

Those brutes were gone to Abbotsford, meant that they would be late back for tea, indeed, very likely they would tea at Abbotsford and not come in till calling-over. Baggy had had to stay in that cupboard until they came.

It was what the fat Baggy deserved! But consideration was no comfort to him whatever.

Several times he thought of yelling at the top of his voice, in which case, no doubt, a master would have come to the study. A master bagging him bagged in a study cupboard, would no doubt have directed the lock to be forced to get him out.

But Baggy dreaded a master coming to the study more than he dreaded imprisonment in the cupboard.

For the question would at once arise—what had he been doing in that cupboard when the door was shut on him?

There was only one answer to that question—he had been annexing the property of others.

That meant a painful interview with Silverson, his Form-master.

Silverson, as all the Fourth knew, was fearfully dutiful as a master, and very particular. He did not care a bean whether Baggy had been in the study cupboard in the Shell or not. Baggy was not very dutiful in some ways, he was over-dutiful in others. If Baggy came before him for judgment, he would cane Baggy. There was not the slightest doubt on that point. He was the kind of man who liked caning a fellow.

Baggy had squirmed under Silverson's cane good many times that term. He knew what it was like—only too well!

Six from Silverson was worse than six from any other master—indeed, Baggy would have preferred a Head's flogging.

So Baggy, tempted as he was to yell for help, did not yell. He did not want help that would result in an interview with Silverson.

Still, it was awful! Instead of yelling for help, hapless Baggy groaned. He groaned and groaned.

Tap!

That tap at the study door reached Baggy.



Leaving Manners, Tom Merry made a rush at the doorway and, as if not seeing Mr. Silverson coming in, crashed right into the master of the Fourth. "Oh!" roared Mr. Silverson, as he went spinning.

in the cupboard. Somebody was coming to study. Some fellow who did not know that Merry & Co. had gone out—unless, perhaps, was Linton after Tom Merry!

Baggy squinted from the keyhole of the cupboard. If it was Mr. Linton, Baggy did not want to attract his attention. Linton, no doubt, would effect his release; but he would have led him over to his Form-master.

The study door opened. From his keyhole Baggy could not see the way, but he saw the opening door. Someone was looking into the study. The next moment that someone stepped into the room.

When Baggy saw him: and from the bottom of his heart he was glad that he had made no mistake to draw attention.

It was his own beak, Silverson! Baggy, silent as a mouse, squinted at Mr. Silverson in astonishment. It was quite likely Mr. Linton might have come up to a Shell

But why Mr. Silverson, the master of the Fourth, should have come was a mystery to Trimble. Silverson had no business in the

That muttered word reached Baggy's ear. Baggy grinned. He understood now.

All the Lower School knew how Silverson was on Tom Merry's track. It was no business of Silverson's if a Shell fellow cut detention, and, in the case of any other Shell fellow, Silverson would have taken no heed. But in the case of Tom Merry it was a different matter.

Baggy did not need telling that his beak had suspected that Tom might cut, and had come up to the study to find out.

No doubt he had an excuse ready to explain his visit, if he had found Tom Merry there, busy on his Latin exercise. As a relation of Tom's, that was easy enough.

But he had not found Tom there. As soon as he entered the study he knew what he wanted to know.

Tom had cut.

Squinting from the cupboard keyhole Baggy could see Silverson's face, with its darkened eye and the bitter, sneering, sardonic expression on it.

A mouse had nothing on Baggy for silence and stillness. Baggy Trimble was not bright, but he

was bright enough to know what Silverson would feel like if he found out that he had been watched while spying in a study in which he had no concern. Baggy's podgy skin almost crept at the idea of what he would get from Silverson if the Worm spotted him there now.

Silverson stood for a moment or two as if in thought. Then, to Baggy's surprise and alarm, he stepped back to the door and closed it silently.

Now that he had found Tom missing and the Latin exercise untouched on the table, Baggy expected him to go—with news for Linton. It was Linton who would have to deal with Tom; and all that Silverson could do was to let Linton know.

But Silverson was not going; and, for a moment or two, Baggy had a horrid misgiving that he suspected that somebody was in the study.

But his Form-master did not glance towards the cupboard. He stepped back to the table and picked up a paper that lay there.

As he held it up to look at it Baggy could see what it was—a Latin exercise, obviously the one Tom had thrown on the table.

Baggy knew—what Mr. Silverson could see—that that exercise was quite untouched. Not a word had been written on it; not an answer to a single question. Why Silverson was interested in it at all was a puzzle to the fat Baggy in the cupboard.

Mr. Silverson laid the paper on the table again. To Baggy's further astonishment, he picked up Tom's pen and dipped it in the inkpot.

Baggy blinked.

It was impossible that Silverson was going to do that paper for the absent junior. That was unthinkable! But what on earth was he going to do?

He was leaning over the table, writing on that paper; Baggy could see that. What he was writing on it, Baggy could not see—and could not begin to guess. All this was utterly bewildering to Baggy's fat brain.

Silverson was a couple of minutes at work. Then he laid the pen back beside the inkpot.

He stepped back to the door.

Seemingly he had finished in the study now. Baggy Trimble heard the door open and close softly.

Silverson was gone.

"Oh, jimmity!" breathed the bewildered Baggy. Silverson was gone—having written something on that Latin paper! What he had written, and why he had written it, had Baggy guessing.

A less inquisitive fellow than Baggy might have been curious about it. Baggy was intensely curious. He would have been very glad to get a squint at what Silverson had written on Tom Merry's Latin paper.

But Baggy had no chance of squinting at that paper. Baggy was still locked in the study cupboard—with no chance of getting out! He was glad that Silverson was gone, and that there was no longer any danger of discovery by him; but that was the only comfort he had.

Baggy groaned—but he was less inclined than ever to yell for help—with Silverson in the offing! A yell might reach the ears that Baggy least desired to hear. Baggy mumbled and grumbled—but he promptly ceased to mumble and grumble as he heard the sound of the study door opening again; and, silent as a mouse, he applied his eye once more to the keyhole of the cupboard door.

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BY WHOSE HAND?

JAMES SILVERSON stood in his own study with a faint, sardonic smile on his hard, lined face, looking at a sheet of cardboard which lay on his table.

It was the picture left there for his inspection by Arthur Augustus D'Arcy more than an hour ago, but Gussy, in leaving it there, certainly had not supposed that James would smile when he saw it.

But James was smiling—a feline, sardonic smile. This was not James' first view of that work of art. James had seen it when he entered his study after taking Tom Merry to Mr. Linton. And on the first view of it, James had not smiled—he had glared with fury.

Now, however, he was smiling. It did not cross his mind that a fellow in his own Form, the Fourth, had placed that disrespectful picture there. James knew, probably, that he was loathed in the Fourth; he might even have suspected that he was regarded as a rebel, and that the whole Form would have liked to see him booted out of St. Jim's.

Nevertheless, when anything happened in James, he automatically suspected that it came from Tom Merry.

He never lost a chance of making himself unpleasant to that distant relation of his, and he took it for granted that Tom did the same—which was far from being the case.

Tom, certainly, had hit back at his enemies good many times; but he was very far from having enmity in his mind all the time—enmity was a feeling quite alien to Tom's healthy, cheerful mind.

Often and often he forgot James' existence altogether, and his dislike only revived when James disagreeably reminded him of it.

James, concentrated on enmity, did not understand that in the least. His perpetual misanthropy was judging others by himself—which gave him a very low opinion of all mankind!

That insulting picture came from Tom Merry. James did not even think of doubting that. He did not, in fact, want to doubt it. So far as James had a rag of a conscience, it was shocked by the belief that rivalry and enmity were as bitter on Tom's side as his own.

He would have laughed sarcastically at the idea that Tom had never given a thought to old Mrs. Priscilla Fawcett's money—his own thought being incessantly on it. He would not have believed, and did not want to believe, that Tom would have entirely forgotten that he disliked him, if only James would have left him in peace.

This fresh insult came from Tom! James had no doubt that Tom had left that picture in the study only a few minutes before he had barged him over in the House doorway.

It was one more item in the long account to be paid for with heavy interest.

Looking at that picture, James smiled, a very unpleasant smile! That picture, with its inscription in capital letters, had given James an idea—which he had carried out, to the mystification of the fat Baggy in the cupboard in Study No. 10.

No eye had fallen on James in the Staff quarters, so far as he knew—naturally, he never dreamed that a gooseberry eye had been on him from the keyhole of a cupboard! James was wary; but the wariest schemer would hardly have guessed that one!

Now, having returned to his own study, James

looked at that picture, smiled in his cat-like way, and considered his next step.

Tom Merry had cut; no doubt he had carried on with the afternoon's excursion, whatever it was—anyhow, he was gone from the school. Before he came back Linton had to visit his study—it was an essential part of James' scheme to get Linton to enter Study No. 10 in the Shell before any of the owners of that study returned.

Probably he had plenty of time, but he did not mean to lose any. He picked up the cardboard, after a few minutes' thought, and left his study, taking that picture along with him.

He tapped at Mr. Linton's door.

The master of the Shell was busy correcting a pile of Form papers. He did not want any interruption, least of all from a man he disliked. He gave James an icy look as he entered.

What had happened that afternoon had annoyed Mr. Linton intensely. His annoyance was about equally divided between Tom Merry and Mr. Silverson.

"Pray excuse me," said James in a sarcastic tone. "I should like you to look at this, Mr. Linton, if you can spare a few minutes."

He laid the cardboard on the table before the master of the Shell.

Mr. Linton stared at it, frowning.

The picture of a Form-master hurtling, with a big boot behind him, might seem amusing to a junior, but it did not seem amusing to a master who was a stickler for discipline and authority.

And the inscription on the card, "WHAT WILL HAPPEN WHEN THE HEAD KNOWS WHAT A ROTTER YOU ARE!" which would have made the Fourth Form grin, made Mr. Linton frown with grim disapproval.

"May I ask what you think of that, sir?" inquired Mr. Silverson in the same sarcastic tone. Mr. Linton looked at him.

"I think that this is the very extreme of disrespect!" he answered. "But I do not quite see how it concerns me, Mr. Silverson."

"Indeed!" said James.

"I do not know where you obtained this wretched sketch," said Mr. Linton. "But you would not imply, sir, that it refers to me! It is perfectly plain that it refers to yourself! Obviously the master depicted here is represented as having a discoloured eye, which leaves no doubt on the subject."

"Certainly it refers to me!" snapped James.

"I found it lying on the table in my study. It was placed there for me to find. And I am perfectly assured that it was placed there by a boy of your Form."

Mr. Linton's lip curled.

"Merry, I suppose?" he said.

"Yes, Merry!"

"If you have any evidence to adduce, Mr. Silverson, I will listen to it. I shall take no notice of mere suspicion."

"I have no evidence of any kind to adduce—the young rascal is too wary for that!"

"Then I am not concerned in the matter. But I will tell you this, Mr. Silverson; it is very plain to me that you have a personal dislike for a schoolboy who is related to you, and that you are prepared to suspect Merry of anything and everything. I have not the slightest doubt that this absurd picture is the work of some boy in your own Form."

"I do not believe so for one moment, sir."

"It certainly is not the work of Tom Merry, in my opinion, apart from the fact that there is no reason whatever to suppose so," said Mr. Linton.

"This picture is out of drawing—and Merry draws fairly well. It would have been much better drawn, I think, had it been the work of a boy who draws as well as Merry."

James shrugged his shoulders.

"You decline to take note of this matter, then?" he asked.

"Certainly I do!" exclaimed Mr. Linton sharply. "I have punished Merry this afternoon, Mr. Silverson, for what he has done; I certainly shall not dream of punishing him for what he has not done."

"There is, naturally, no proof, as the boy was not seen to enter my study, and he has been careful to write in capital letters, so that his handwriting could not be identified," said James. "But—"

"Proof is required, sir, before punishment can be administered," said Mr. Linton. "If that is not your view, it is mine."

"This piece of cardboard, sir, has been cut from a larger sheet, as you can see," said Mr. Silverson.

"Well?"

"It is probable that the remainder of the sheet may be found in the study of the boy who drew this insulting picture."

"Very probable!" assented Mr. Linton. "No doubt a Fourth Form study."

"If the remainder of the sheet could be found, and this piece fitted to it, would you regard that as something in the nature of evidence, sir?" asked James sarcastically.

"Certainly I should."

"May I request you to step into Merry's study and request him to show you any cardboard that he may possess?"

Mr. Linton compressed his lips.

"And if," pursued James, "you find a sheet of cardboard from which a section this size has been cut with a pair of scissors—"

"I do not suppose so for one moment."

"It will take only a few minutes to ascertain the fact."

Mr. Linton, breathing hard, rose to his feet.

"I will do so, Mr. Silverson, to satisfy you," he said. "I regard it as a waste of time, but I will go to Merry's study to make the inquiry."

"I think I have a right to ask that much, sir."

"Very well, please await me here!" snapped Mr. Linton. And he left the study, frowning.

James sat down to wait. He smiled as he waited. He was thinking of what awaited the master of the Shell in Tom Merry's study, and it was quite a pleasant thought to Mr. Silverson.

GUSSY GIVES GOOD ADVICE!

TING-A-LING-A-LING!

Tom Merry glanced round at the loud ringing of a bicycle bell.

Tom was making speed on the road to Abbotsford. It was a long distance to the air field, and he had to do that distance on foot; he could not have ventured, in the circumstances, to wheel out a bicycle. So he was going at a steady trot, when that buzz behind made him glance round, and he beheld the elegant figure of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy mounted on Gussy's handsome jigger.

Gussy was putting on speed.

Having recognised Tom Merry on the road ahead, the swell of St. Jim's pushed on to overtake him.

Tom came to a halt, and waited for him to come up. Arthur Augustus shot alongside in a

minute more, and at once jumped down from his machine.

To Tom's surprise Arthur Augustus gave him a very severe look.

"I find you heah, Tom Mewwy!" he exclaimed. "Looks like it!" agreed Tom. "What's biting you, old man?"

"Nothin' is bitin' me, Tom Mewwy! But I am vewy surprised to find you heah on the woad to Abbotsford!" said Arthur Augustus severely.

"What is there surprising in it, old bean?" asked Tom. "I'm going to the air field to see the show—as I suppose you're doing, though you've started jolly late! Like to give me a lift on that bike?"

"Yaas, wathah—if you will weturn to the school, Tom Mewwy! I will lend you my jiggah with pleasure and walk the west of the way."

Tom blinked at him.

"I'm not going back!" he answered.

"I twust that you are, deah boy! I am vewy sowwy that you have been detained this aftahnoon, but it is feahfully diswepctful to bwreak detention, and, weally, I think you ought to know bettah. You are juniah captain of the House, Tom Mewwy, and in a wathah wespensible posish, and this is not the sort of example you ought to set othah fellows."

Tom Merry coloured.

"Fathead!" he answered.

"Diswepct to a Form-mastah, Tom Mewwy, is bad form!" said Arthur Augustus, with dignity.

Tom laughed.

"Such as drawing a picture of him being kicked out of the school?" he asked.

"Bai Jove! That is a vewy diffewent mattah! Silvahson is a wat and a wottah and a wapscallion! No fellow could wesppect Silvahson. Aftah all, he is only a tempowaw mastah, and he nevah would have edged into St. Jim's if the Head had known what a wottah he was! I suppose you will not maintain, Tom Mewwy, that your beak is a wat like Silvahson?"

"No, you ass!" grunted Tom. "Linton's all right."

"Vewy well, if he is all wight you have no wight to tweat him with diswepct. I do not blame you for bargin' Silvahson ovah—he is a wat—though it was a wathah weckless pwoceedin'," said Arthur Augustus, shaking his noble head. "It is wathah thick, deah boy, to barge ovah a Form-mastah. I do not wholly approve of it, even in the case of a wat like Silvahson."

"You'd rather he had nabbed you in his study?" grinned Tom.

"Bai Jove! Is that why you did it?" ejaculated Arthur Augustus.

"Do you think I did it for fun, you ass—or just to give him a chance to make trouble for me?"

"My deah chap, I am feahfully obliged to you!" said Arthur Augustus. "It was awfully decent of you, old bean. Bai Jove! If the wat had caught me there, I should not be able to sit down for a week aftahwards! It was tewwibly good of you! But—"

"But we're wasting time!" suggested Tom. "We've missed some of the show already! What about pushing on?"

"I suggest that you weturn to the school, Tom Mewwy. It was vewy wight and pwopah for you to barge that wat ovah, in the circs; but you cannot expect Linton to see that—"

"I don't, ass!"

"Then you must admit that you are twreatin' Linton with diswepct."

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"Oh, rats!" grunted Tom.

"There will be a wow," said Arthur Augustus. "You may wely on it, old fellow, that that wat Silvahson will spy it out, and let Linton know. He is hangin' about the school—he doesn't goin' out with that black eye!"

"Linton will know, anyhow, as I haven't done the Latin paper he set me," grunted Tom. "I need for the Worm to spy, this time."

"Weturn, deah boy—"

"Oh, rot!"

"And get that papah done! I assuah you are a chap, that you will be sowwy for this, what Linton kicks up a wow!"

"I've been in too many rows lately to care for one more!" said Tom bitterly.

"It is a vewy diffewent mattah, deah boy, to be in a wow when you are in the wight, that is a wow when you are in the w'ong," said Arthur Augustus sagely. "This time you are in the w'ong."

Tom Merry stood silent.

"That wat Silvahson would like nothin' bettah," said Arthur Augustus. "He wants to land you in wows with Linton."

"I know that!" grunted Tom.

"Well, you are an ass to help him on with it."

"Oh, blow him!"

"Yaas, blow that wat—but you can't blow your own beak!" said Gussy, shaking his head. "You are vewy lucky to have a decent man like Linton for a beak, instead of a wat like Silvahson. I am surprised at you actin' in this way, Tom Mewwy! It is not wight!"

"Any charge for the sermon?" asked Tom.

"Weally, Tom Mewwy—"

Tom gave an irritated shrug of the shoulders. He had made up his mind to that escapade, and there he was! But he was not wholly satisfied with his action, and he knew quite well that Gussy was right. Even if Linton had, in his annoyance, rather overdone the punishment, that was no excuse for an act of disrespect and defiance towards a Form-master who was generally just, and who always meant to be perfectly just.

"You're an ass, Gussy," said Tom, "and a howling chump, and a blithering idiot, and a yowling fathead! Lend me that bike, if you like, and I'll cut back."

Gussy smiled.

"You can call me all the names you can think of, old chap, if you will do the wight thing," he said.

Tom gave a grunt.

"Are you ass enough to walk miles to Abbotsford, just to let me get back and tackle that Latin paper?" he asked.

"I would walk twice as fah, deah boy, to pwewent you fwom cheekin' your beak, and actin' in a wathah wotten way."

"What?"

"A wathah wotten way!"

Tom Merry gave the swell of St. Jim's a rather expressive look. He was not quite satisfied with what he was doing, but he certainly did not regard it as acting in a rotten way.

But his frowning face broke into a grin.

"Well, if it's rotten, I won't do it, grandfather!" he said cheerily.

"Bai Jove! Weally, you ass—"

"Are you lending me that jigger?"

"Yaas, wathah!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy handed over the bicycle quite cheerfully. Tom Merry whirled round in the road, and put a leg over it.

"Wush like anythin', old chap!" said Arthur Augustus encouragingly. "You will be feahfully glad atahwards if you get that wotten sapah done for Linton, and don't get his wag out."

"Anyhow, I'm going!" said Tom. "Ta-ta, old fathead!"

And he went. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy watched him with a satisfied smile as he went. In a minute he was out of sight, pedalling hard for St. Jim's. Then Arthur Augustus turned, and trotted on cheerfully to Abbotsford—arriving there too late to see much of the show, but happy to have persuaded Tom Merry to do the "wight" thing.

A SHOCK FOR MR. LINTON!

MR. LINTON tapped at the door of Study No. 10 in the Shell, and opened it. "Merry—" he began.

He broke off suddenly. James had given him no hint that he knew, or suspected, that Tom Merry was gone. It was not James' cue to let Linton know that he had visited that study. That was James' own secret.

The master of the Shell was taken quite by surprise. It had not crossed his mind for a moment that Tom was not there. Naturally he had expected to find him at work on that Latin paper.

He stepped into the study with a frown gathering on his brow. He glanced round the room; Tom was not there. Then he looked for the Latin paper.

The junior, after all, might have stepped out of the study. He had been told to go to his study and do that paper—but if, after an hour of it, he had relaxed to the extent of strolling round the passages, Mr. Linton had no fault to find with that. If Tom had cut, it was a serious matter; if he had only strolled out of the study for a few minutes, perhaps to chat with some fellow by way of relief, there was nothing in it.

A glance at the Latin paper would show which it was. That paper ought to be half-done by this time—at least, considerable progress ought to have been made with it. How long Tom's absence had been was easily judged by a glance at his task.

The Latin paper lay, full in view. Mr. Linton looked at it and started as he looked. A thunderous expression came over his face.

A gooseberry eye, squinting from the cupboard keyhole, blinked in startled surprise at the expression on Mr. Linton's face.

More than ever, Baggy Trimble wondered what Silverson could possibly have written on that paper.

Whatever it was, he could see that a mere glance at it had thrown the master of the Shell into a rage.

No doubt Mr. Linton would have felt, and looked, angry had he merely seen that the paper was untouched, that not a single answer was written to a single question, proving that Tom Merry had cleared off, regardless of his Form-master's orders.

But that alone would not have accounted for the anger, indeed, the fury, in the usually calm and serene face of the master of the Shell.

It quite frightened Baggy to see it. Linton was panting—his cheeks pale with anger, his eyes flashing, his hands trembling.

Baggy, could he have seen the paper on the table, would have known the reason.

So far as the Latin questions went, that paper was untouched. But on the blank space, where the answers should have been written, was an inscription in capital letters, similar to those on the picture. And that inscription ran:

**"YOU CAN TAKE YOUR PAPER BACK,
LINTON, YOU OLD FOOL!"**

Mr. Linton gazed at those words.

He trembled with anger.

Nothing had been done to that paper; the boy had contemptuously disregarded it and gone out. That alone was bad enough. But—as it seemed—he had not been satisfied with that.

He knew that if the paper was not taken to his Form-master at the prescribed time, his Form-master would come to the study, probably with a cane under his arm.

Knowing that, he had left this message of insulting defiance to greet his eyes!

What else was Mr. Linton to think?

For several long minutes the master of the Shell stood looking at that paper. Then, with trembling hand, he picked it up, crushing it in his hand, and left the study.

Baggy, in the cupboard, was left more mystified than ever. But no more than to Mr. Silverson did it occur to the master of the Shell that there had been a watching gooseberry-eye in Study No. 10.

Mr. Linton swept down the passage, and down the stairs, rather like a thunderstorm.

He re-entered his study, where James Silverson rose to his feet and gave him an inquiring look.

The master of the Shell composed his face, but he could not conceal what he was feeling from the keen, scrutinising eye of James Silverson.

James' eyes glimmered.

"You have not been long, Mr. Linton!" he said. "May I ask whether you have made sure that Merry—"

"I have been unable to question Merry, sir, as he was not in his study!" answered Mr. Linton in a choking voice.

James raised his eyebrows.

"I do not quite understand you, sir!" he said coldly. "I distinctly heard you tell Merry that he was detained in the House for the afternoon, and was to work at a paper in his study. This was a part of his punishment for his ruffianly attack on me in the House doorway."

"Yes—but—"

"If this punishment was rescinded, sir, after I left you, I do not regard it as fair dealing with me!"

"The punishment was not rescinded!" snapped Mr. Linton. "Nothing of the kind."

"Did you not say that Merry was not in his study?"

"I did!" said Mr. Linton, breathing hard. "The boy has gone out without leave, disregarding my orders, and left his task untouched."

"Oh! I am sure I beg your pardon, sir—I did not understand that! In that case, the matter must stand over until he returns to the school," said Mr. Silverson. "I will waste no more of your time, Mr. Linton."

The master of the Shell nodded—he could hardly speak. Silverson left the study.

Not till then did Mr. Linton uncrumple the paper in his hand. He did not desire that paper,

with its insulting message, to meet Mr. Silverson's sardonic eyes.

He little dreamed that those eyes had seen it already, and that it was Silverson's hand that had inscribed the message.

Left alone in the study, Mr. Linton looked at the Latin paper again and threw it on his table.

He did not sit down again to his interrupted work. He was far too deeply disturbed for that.

He paced the study, his eyes every now and then turning on the paper on the table. When a foot-step passed in the passage he hurriedly threw a blotting-sheet over it; he did not want it to be seen, if anyone came to his study. That a member of his Form had insulted and defied him so grossly was not the kind of thing Mr. Linton wanted to advertise.

Only one other person's eyes were to see that paper—the headmaster's—when Mr. Linton took it—and Tom Merry—to Dr. Holmes!

What would happen when the Head saw that paper was not to be doubted. This was going to be Tom Merry's last act of defiance at St. Jim's. Twice already that term he had come within measurable distance of expulsion—this time he would not escape.

While the agitated master of the Shell paced his study James Silverson walked in the quadrangle with a pleasant smile on his face.

Fourth Form fellows who noticed him thought that the Worm was looking unusually good-tempered.

James, indeed, was in a good temper for once. What was going to happen to Tom Merry was enough to make James feel quite amiable!

AND ONE FOR TOM MERRY!

"OH, my hat!" exclaimed Tom Merry in surprise and dismay.

Breathless, the captain of the Shell entered his study.

Having decided to act upon Arthur Augustus D'Arcy's sage advice, Tom had lost no time in getting back to St. Jim's. He had handed Gussy's bike over to Talbot of the Shell, whom he came upon near the school, to put away in the bikeshed, and clambered in over the wall by which he had left. In a few more minutes he had climbed in at the back window, which he had left open, and cut back to his study.

He had been absent hardly more than an hour. No one had seen him go, or return—except D'Arcy and Talbot. Linton need never know that he had been out of gates at all.

Tom—as Gussy had wisely predicted—was already glad that he had changed his mind. He had come back full of good resolutions. A good deal of time had been lost; but a hard grind at that mouldy Latin paper would get it through by tea-time, and all would be well. If he could not finish it in the time he would, at least, do all that he could—that was all that was left to him after his escapade.

So it was surprising, and utterly dismaying, to find that the Latin paper was no longer on his study table where he had left it.

He stared blankly at the table.

But it was gone.

It was quite a knock-down blow to his good resolutions. It was simply mystifying, for a moment or two, to find that the paper was gone. Who on earth could have taken it? Even if a fellow had happened to come to the study, he would not have meddled with a Latin paper.

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Then it flashed into his mind who had taken the Latin paper. Linton, of course, had come up to the study. Perhaps he had suspected him of cutting, and had looked in to make sure. In that case, having the paper untouched, no doubt he would take it away with him.

In a dismayed and worried frame of mind Tom did not heed a squealing voice from the cupboard, which reminded him that Baggy Trimble was still there—a circumstance he had quite forgotten.

"Tom Merry! I can see you, you swab! Have you got that key?" came the squeal from Baggy's prison. "I say, did you get that key off Lowther? Will you let me out of this putrid cupboard?"

Tom hardly heard—he did not heed at all.

He had enough trouble of his own on hand without worrying about the fat Baggy's.

What was he going to do?

If Linton had taken that paper, Linton knew that he had cut. There was no hope now of knowing that dark. He could guess the state of affairs in which he would find his Form-master, if he went to him now.

But, there was nothing else to be done. After his escapade there was nothing for it but to tell Linton he was sorry, and ask for the paper—and if Linton gave him six, take it with a stiff up-lip!

But was it Linton who had taken the paper? If there was any other way of accounting for his absence he did not want to hunt for more trouble with his Form-master.

"Tom Merry, you beast!" came Baggy's dismaying squeal.

"Oh!" ejaculated Tom.

He turned to the cupboard. That fat idiot had said that he could see him—if so, he must have seen Linton if he came. Baggy could tell him what he wanted to know.

"Trimble, you fat ass—" began Tom.

"Will you let me out?" yelled Baggy.

"I can't—I haven't the key!"

"Oh, you swab! Didn't you get it off Lowther?" yelled Baggy.

"I haven't seen Lowther—"

"Why haven't you?" yelled Baggy.

"I'm going to stick here hours and hours and hours? Oh, I'll jolly well pay you out for it!"

"Has Linton been in this study?"

"Yes, he jolly well has, and he knows you've been out!" snorted Baggy.

"I hope he'll give you six, you rotter!"

"Did he take a paper from the table?"

"Yes, he did; and I can tell you he's jolly wild! I hope he'll take you to the Head as he flogged."

Tom Merry turned to the study door. There was a yell of fury from the cupboard.

"Will you get me out of this, you beast! I say, Merry get me out of this somehow, you rotter!"

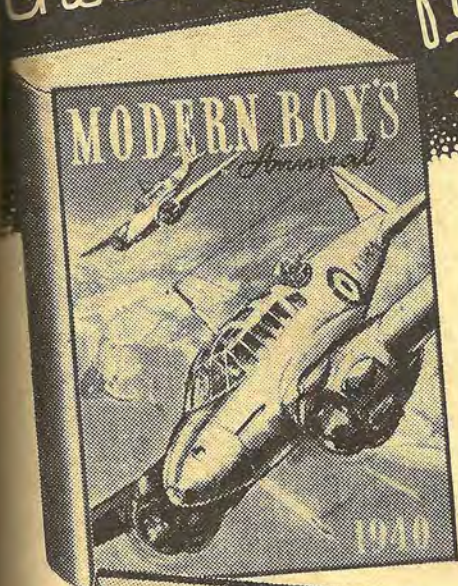
But Tom Merry was gone.

He knew now what he wanted to know. Linton had been to the study, and he had taken the paper away. Tom Merry went down the passage.

It was unpleasant enough to face his Form-master. But it had to be done, either now or later; and obviously it was better to face Linton as soon as possible. It would show, at least, that he had changed his mind about defying authority, and, after all, his absence had been brief. It was not as if he had gone on to Abbotsford.

(Continued on page 18.)

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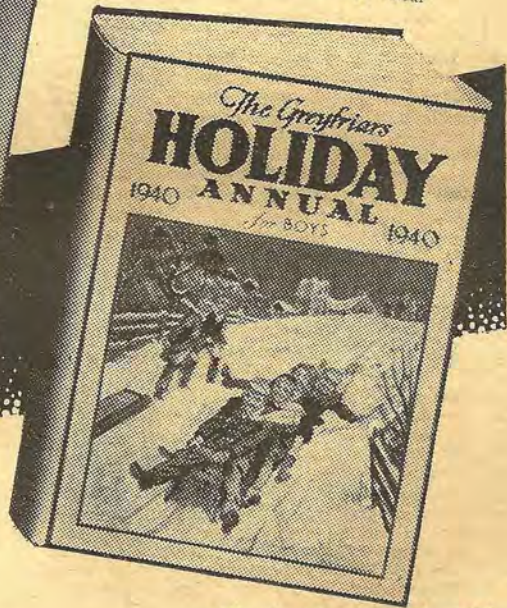
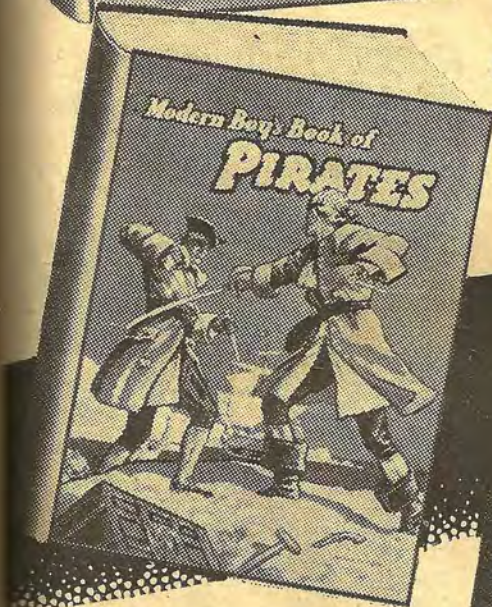
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not returned till calling-over, as he had originally intended.

He tapped at Mr. Linton's door.

"Come in!"

Tom opened the door and entered.

He breathed rather quickly as he caught the look his Form-master fixed on him. He had expected an angry glance—but he had not expected that fixed look of bitter, icy anger and hostility.

"So you have returned, Merry!" said Mr. Linton in a cold, hard, cutting voice.

"Yes, sir," stammered Tom. "I'm sorry—"

"Indeed!"

"I—I know I oughtn't to have cut, sir!" Tom faltered, startled, almost alarmed, by that fixed hostile grimace in his Form-master's face. "I—I know that! But—but I've come back, sir, and—and if you'll let me have the paper again I'll get it through, sir—"

"That is enough!" said Mr. Linton in a tone of scornful contempt that cut like a knife. "You are aware that I have seen the paper you left in your study?"

"I—I suppose so, sir—"

"Very well!" said Mr. Linton. "Now listen to me, Merry! Immediately after prayers to-morrow morning your headmaster will see you in his study. I shall be present. Now you may go."

Tom looked at him.

"Are you going to send me up to the Head, sir?" he asked in a low voice.

"Did you not expect that such an act of disrespect, of defiance, of gross insult to your Form-master would be placed before Dr. Holmes?" asked Mr. Linton contemptuously.

"I—I never meant—"

"I shall place that paper before your headmaster, Merry, and leave the matter to his judgment. Now go."

"I've said that I'm sorry, sir—"

"Leave my study!"

Mr. Linton pointed to the door. Slowly Tom Merry left the study and shut the door after him.

He went out into the quad with his brain in a whirl. He had acted disrespectfully, he realised that now—it might be said defiantly. But fellows, after all, had cut a detention before; it was a matter with which Form-masters were accustomed to deal; it was no matter for being "sent up."

Why Linton was taking this harsh and implacable view was a sheer mystery to Tom—unaware of what his Form-master had read on that paper which he had left blank. He had done wrong, but not to that extent—not to the extent of exciting the bitter, rigid hostility he had read in Linton's face.

Tom simply could not understand it.

He was going up to the Head in the morning. That meant a flogging—probably a public flogging in Hall. He did not guess that it meant the sack—not knowing what he was believed to have done.

Linton had refused to let him have the paper back. He was not going to give him a chance to make up for his fault, as he was eager and anxious to do. Tom Merry tramped moodily about the quad, with anger and resentment rising in his breast—and did not even notice the smiling glance he received from James Silverson.

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TOM IN TROUBLE!

MANNERS and Lowther tramped into Room No. 10 in the Shell, and Monty brought a parcel on the table. They were rather late for tea, and Monty had brought supplies for the same.

Tom Merry was not in the study, from which they concluded that he had finished his detention task and gone out for a spot of fresh air afterwards.

Thump!

"Lemme out!" came a squeal from the wash cupboard.

"Oh, my hat!" exclaimed Manners. "That Trimble!" Monty had told him on the way to Abbotsford of Baggy's sad fate.

"Still there, old fat grampus?" chuckled Lowther.

"Oh, you rotter!" wailed the wretched Baggy. "Oh, you swab! You jolly well know I've been in here all the afternoon!"

"Why didn't you crawl out through the wash hole? A slim chap like you—"

"Yah!" roared Baggy. "Will you lemme out! I'd jolly well go to my beak about this, out—only—"

"Only he would ask you why you got into the cupboard!" chuckled Lowther. "Still, go to bed if you like."

"I—I—I won't if you'll lemme out!" wailed



"Tell me at once the name of the person—"

"It—it—it was—was—" Baggy seemed

"Mr. Silverson."

Trimble. "You awful beast, keeping a chap shut up in a cupboard—"

"Now, what did I do with that key?" said Monty Lowther thoughtfully.

There was a roar of dismay from the hapless Baggy at the bare thought that Lowther might have lost the cupboard key.

"By Jove! It's not in this pocket!" said Monty.

"Oh jiminy!" gasped Baggy.

"And it's not in this other pocket!"

"Oh, you awful swab, have you lost it?"

"Oh, no, it's not in either of those pockets! Still, as I didn't put it in either of them, that's all right."

"You—you—you—" spluttered the unhappy occupant of the cupboard.

"Here it is!" Lowther felt in the right pocket and took out the key. "Now, if you'd like me to let you out, Trimble—"

"Yes! Quick! I've been here ages! I'm fearfully hungry! You rotten swab—I—I—I mean, dear old fellow, do let me out!"

"Sorry you scoffed the bikkies?"

"Oh, yes, awfully sorry!" groaned Baggy. "Anything you like! Oh dear! I—I'll never come to this study again—never! Let me out, old swab—I—I mean, old fellow!"

Monty Lowther inserted the key in the lock at last and turned it. The cupboard door flew

open, and a fat figure rolled out, gasping with relief.

"Rotter!" gasped Baggy, perhaps by way of thanks.

"You're getting off cheap," Manners pointed out. "Some pinchers get three months; you've only had three hours!"

"Yah!"

Baggy rolled to the door. Manners and Lowther grinned at him cheerfully as he went. Baggy had had his lesson—and they charitably hoped that it had done him good.

In the doorway Baggy turned. Baggy would have been glad to collar Lowther with one fat paw, Manners with the other, bang their heads together, and then mop up the study with them. That was not practical politics; but Baggy had an arrow in his quiver, all the same.

"Yah! Tom Merry's for it!" he howled. "Your beastly pal is going to get it in his beastly neck—so you can put that in your pipe and smoke it! Yah to you!"

And, having discharged that Parthian shot, Baggy scuttled away down the Shell passage at top speed and vanished.

Manners and Lowther ceased to grin. That Parthian shot had taken effect. They had not been quite easy in their minds about Tom while they were out that afternoon. Now they wondered what might have happened in their absence.

"Tom can't have cut," said Lowther uneasily. "We never saw anything of him at Abbotsford."

"That fat frump would know if he did," said Manners. "He's been here all the afternoon. Let's look for him."

They left the study—forgetting the lateness of tea and their own keen appetites for the same. On the study landing they came on Blake and Herries, Digby and D'Arcy, heading for Study No. 6.

"Seen Tom?" called out Manners.

Four heads were shaken.

"Only just got in," answered Blake. "Anything up?"

"It's all wight, deah boys!" said Arthur Augustus reassuringly. "I haven't seen Tom Mewwy since we got in, but he's awound somewhere."

"How do you know, ass, if you've only just got in?" grunted Lowther.

Arthur Augustus smiled.

"Because I spotted him on the woad when he was cleahin' off—"

"Then he cut!" exclaimed Manners.

"Yaas, wathah! But it's all wight—he changed his mind, and I lent him my jiggah to get back on, so he must have been back undah the houah. Don't you wowwy—it's all wight!"

"Oh, good!" said Manners, and they went on to the stairs. "But what did that fat idiot Trimble mean, then?" he added, as they went down.

"Goodness knows! Let's find Tom."

They found Tom Merry in the quad a few minutes later. With his hands driven deep in his pockets, and a moody frown on his brow, he was pacing rather aimlessly on the path under the elms—the spot where, a few days ago, James had misapprehended his warning to "mind that worm."

"Oh, here you are!" said Manners.

"I didn't see you come in," said Tom. He coloured a little. He had rather forgotten his

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on Merry's Latin paper!" said Mr. Linton. It out. "Who?" asked the Shell master. gasped Baggy.

friends in his gloomy and resentful reflections since his interview with Mr. Linton.

"Well, we've come in, anyhow!" said Lowther.

"What about tea?"

"Oh, all right!"

"Never mind tea for a minute," said Manners quietly. "What's the matter, Tom? I can see that something is."

Tom's eyes gleamed.

"Linton's got his back up!" he answered. "I was ass enough to clear off; but I came back—not more than an hour—but the old ass seems to have gone to my study and taken that dashed Latin paper away! And——"

"Six?" asked Manners.

Tom gave a bitter laugh.

"No, I dare say I asked for that much. I shouldn't grouse about that."

"Then what——"

"Sent up to the Head," said Tom. "I'm to go before the beak after prayers in the morning. That means a flogging, I suppose. As if fellows have never cut a detention before! Cardew cut a detention the other day, and even that rat Silverson only gave him six; he never thought of sending him to the Head. But that's Linton's game—goodness knows why!"

"Did you cheek him?" asked Manners.

"No!" snapped Tom. "Don't be an ass, Manners!"

"Well, I can't understand Linton taking that line if it was only cutting a detention. Fellows are never sent up to the Head for that. Linton won't be popular in the Head's study if he wastes the big beak's time on little things like that. There must be something else."

"There's nothing else."

"If you checked him."

"I've told you I didn't!" said Tom fiercely. "And I was back in an hour. I could have done that mouldy paper if he'd let me! It wasn't as if I'd gone on to Abbotsford and stayed out till roll, either. But even for that a fellow wouldn't be sent up to the Head. That ass Gussy persuaded me to come back! I might as well have made a day of it!"

"If there's nothing else——"

"I've told you there's nothing else."

"Then I can't understand it," said Manners.

The subject dropped, and the Terrible Three went in to tea. But it was rather a gloomy tea in Study No. 10 in the Shell.

WHO?

"WHAT is it, Manners?"

Mr. Linton found Harry Manners waiting for him at his study door when he came away from Common-room some time after tea.

Manners coloured a little.

"If I might speak to you, sir——" he said.

Mr. Linton opened his study door and went in, and signed to Manners to enter. His eyes, falling on a sheet of blotting-paper covering a Latin paper that lay on the table, glinted.

Then he gave Manners a glance of cold inquiry.

"Well?" he said curtly.

Manners' colour deepened. It was awkward to say what he had come there to say. Linton's look was far from inviting. But there was a quiet and steady determination in Manners' nature, and he went on with it.

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"I've come to speak to you about Tom Merry, sir."

Mr. Linton raised his hand.

"Say nothing on that subject, Manners!"

"But, sir——"

"If Merry has sent you here it is useless. Say no more."

"Tom doesn't know I've come, sir," said Manners eagerly. "I've come on my own account because I can't understand——"

Mr. Linton's lip curled.

"Probably Merry has not told you," he said.

"Some sense of shame may have prevented him from doing so. It is useless to speak, Manners! Merry will leave the school to-morrow, and there is nothing to be said!"

Manners gave a jump.

"You don't mean that Tom is going to be sacked, sir?" he exclaimed incredulously.

"Merry will certainly be expelled!" said Mr. Linton. "If he has not told you so, you now hear it from me! You may go, Manners!"

Manners did not go. He stood rooted to the floor, staring at his Form-master. He was utterly amazed and overwhelmed.

"Mr. Linton," he exclaimed, "Tom doesn't know it's so bad as that! He thinks it may be a flogging, but——"

"He must know," said Mr. Linton.

"He doesn't, sir. And I can't understand. He did cut a detention, but a fellow isn't sacked for that. He says there is nothing else——"

"He said there is nothing else? No doubt he was ashamed to tell you. Please say no more, Manners!"

"But what else was there, sir?" gasped Manners. "I—I thought he might have been cheeky, and I asked him, but he said 'No.' He never meant it, sir, if—he was. He can't make out why you are so shirty—I—I—I—mean, why you are so angry with him, sir. And we can't make out——"

"Merry knows his offence perfectly well, Manners," said Mr. Linton coldly. "He can hardly have forgotten having written an insulting message on the Latin paper I gave him——"

"He never touched that paper, sir; he has told me so. He would have done it when he got in if you'd let him. He never wrote anything on it—never put pen to it at all!"

"Manners, I have told you to say no more! That Latin paper lies on my table now, with a disrespectful, defiant, insulting message written on it—written to meet my eyes!" said Mr. Linton. "Merry knew, no doubt, that I should come to his study for the paper if he did not bring it to me as directed; though, as it happened, it was for another reason that I went. It appears that he returned, after all, early, perhaps with the intention of keeping it from my eyes; but it was too late."

"Something was written on the paper, sir?" stammered Manners. He was utterly taken aback by this unexpected development.

"Yes!" snapped Mr. Linton. "A gross insult to his Form-master!"

"May I see it, sir?"

"You may not!" said Mr. Linton. "Only the headmaster will see it when Merry comes before him to-morrow morning! Now go!"

"But, sir," stammered Manners, "Tom can't have——"

"Leave my study, Manners!"

Manners left his Form-master's study, with his head feeling as if it was turning round. He had

—he had felt certain—that there was something else—something more than a thoughtless aside—to account for Mr. Linton's inflexible rigidity. Now he knew what it was, and he was bewildered.

He hurried to the junior day-room, where he found Tom Merry and Lowther and a crowd of fellows. He drew his chums aside into the window.

"I've been to Linton, Tom," he said in a low voice.

"What rot!" grunted Tom. "What the thump you butt in for? Let him get on with it! Asking nothing of him!"

"Oh, don't get on the high horse, for the love of Mike!" exclaimed Manners impatiently. "This is frightfully serious! Linton says it's the sack!"

Tom stared at him.

"Don't be a goat!" he said. "How can it be sack for cutting a detention?"

"Did you write anything on that Latin paper, Tom?"

"I've told you I never touched it!" said Tom indignantly. "I came back to do it, but Linton had it away, and he wouldn't let me have it in!"

"Did you write anything insulting on it?"

"Don't be a fool!"

"Draw it mild, Manners, old man!" said Manners. "As if Tom would—"

"We're getting into pretty deep waters," said Manners. "Linton's got his rag out to such an extent because something insulting was written on that paper, Tom. He wouldn't let me see it, but I must have been something pretty bad. But Head's going to see it in the morning, and he's going to be barked for it."

"Is Linton mad?" said Tom contemptuously. "I never touched the paper! I chucked it on the table in Study No. 10 and left it there."

"If you didn't, somebody else did!"

"What rot!"

"Will you have a little sense?" breathed Manners. "There's something insulting written on that paper, and Linton thinks you left it for him to see when he came to your study for it."

"Oh gum!" muttered Lowther. "Is that it, Tom?"

Tom Merry's expression changed. He was angry and resentful, and not in a mood for calm reasoning, but he began to understand.

"Do you mean that somebody dropped into my study and scribbled something on the paper while I was out?" he asked. "Oh, my hat! Look at it's rot! As if anybody would!"

Manners clenched his hands.

"Did the Worm know you'd cut?" he asked.

"I dare say he did; he's always spying after me," said Tom. "I got out pretty quietly; but the rat was spying he may have known."

"Yes, he may have known," said Manners indignantly; "and while you were gone somebody got into the study and wrote something on that paper for Linton to think you'd done it."

"Oh!" gasped Tom.

"But the fist," said Lowther—"his fist or anybody else's wouldn't be like Tom's."

Linton never showed me the paper—he didn't. It's made him feel too sick to let anybody see it. I don't know what the fist was—perhaps capital letters, like Gussy put on the headed picture!"

"But—" said Tom.

"Have a little sense, old man! Linton's got his back up because there was an insult written

on that paper. If you never wrote it somebody else did."

"Well, I didn't, you owl!"

"Then somebody else did, and we can guess that somebody's name," breathed Manners. "There's only one man here who'd do such a thing, and he's done things as bad—or worse—before. We've got to get this clear."

"How?" said Tom bitterly. "If the fist can't be traced—and it's pretty clear that it can't, or Linton wouldn't know I never wrote it—well, if it can't, what does it look like? If it was Silver-son, he's got me this time. Think he would let anybody see him sneaking to my study to play a dirty trick?"

Monty Lowther gave a howl.

"Trimble!"

"What about Trimble, ass?" asked Tom, staring at him.

Monty Lowther's eyes were blazing with excitement.

"Oh gum!" he panted. "Can't you see? That fat goat was in the study cupboard all the afternoon—"

"Oh!" gasped Tom.

"If anybody came to the study, he knows—"

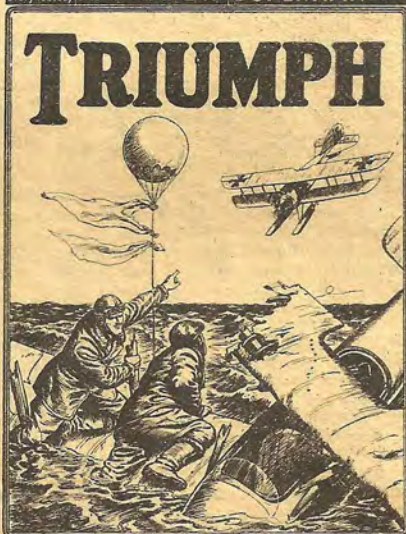
"He does," said Tom. "I got it from him that Linton had been there and taken the Latin paper. He saw him through the cupboard keyhole."

"If he saw Linton, he saw somebody else who came before Linton."

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Manners caught his breath.

"We've got him!" he muttered. "We've got him, got the cur on toast! Let's go and find Trimble."

And the Terrible Three, in great excitement now, hurried out of the day-room in search of Baggy Trimble. Never, in the course of his podgy career, had the fat Baggy been so much in demand.

TESTIMONY FROM TRIMBLE!

MR. LINTON hastily dropped the blotting-sheet over a paper that lay on his study table, at which he had been looking again with knitted brows and glinting eyes. He covered it quickly from sight as there was a tramp of feet at his study door.

A knock rang on the door, and it opened. The master of the Shell stared at four juniors—three Shell fellows surrounding a fat member of the Fourth Form, who trundled into the study with a surprised fat face.

Mr. Linton's brow grew thunderous.

To the Shell master, the sight of Tom Merry just then was rather like a red rag to a bull. Neither could he imagine any reason why Tom Merry, Manners, and Lowther should trundle Baggy Trimble into his study.

"What does this mean?" he snapped angrily. "Leave my study at once! Trimble, why are you here?"

"Oh jiminy!" ejaculated Trimble. "I—I say, sir, I—I never wanted to come! These chaps said you wanted to see me, sir—"

"Upon my word!" He reached towards his cane. "I shall excuse you, Trimble, if such is the case; but you others—"

"Trimble has something to tell you, sir," said Manners. He shut the study door. "It's very important, sir."

"Nonsense!"

"You must listen, sir," said Tom Merry quietly. "Mr. Linton, Manners has told me what you said to him—"

"I desire to hear nothing from you, Merry."

"You must hear me, sir! I never wrote anything on that Latin paper. I never knew that anything was written on it till Manners told me that you had said so."

"That will do!"

"If you do not believe me, sir—"

"I do not!" said Mr. Linton, with grim contempt.

"Then you must listen to proof, sir! What was written on that paper I don't know, but I can prove that I never wrote a word on it."

"Nonsense!"

"Trimble knows, sir—"

"I—I say, you let me out of this!" exclaimed Trimble, in alarm. "I never knew there was going to be a row. You said Mr. Linton wanted to see me."

"So he does," said Manners. "You're going to tell him what you've told us."

"I ain't!" howled Trimble.

"Silence!" exclaimed Mr. Linton angrily.

"Manners, you may speak. Tell me at once what all this means."

"It means, sir, that Trimble saw the person who wrote on Tom Merry's Latin paper while Tom was out this afternoon," said Manners.

"What?"

"Trimble was in our study all this afternoon, sir."

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"That is certainly not correct," said Mr. Linton. "No one was in the study when I was there myself, Manners."

"You did not see Trimble, sir. He was locked in the study cupboard."

Mr. Linton jumped.

"Wha-a-t?" he stuttered.

"I did it, sir," said Monty Lowther. "Trimble was scoffing the biscuits in the cupboard, and I slammed the door on him and locked it before I went out."

"I wasn't!" howled Baggy. "I just went there to look at the biscuits. I wasn't scoffing them at all, and then you banged the door shut and locked me in, and—"

"Silence! Is it possible that this boy was in the study unseen, locked in the cupboard?" he claimed Mr. Linton.

"I wasn't scoffing the biscuits!" gasped Trimble. "I may have sampled a few. Then that swab locked me in, and I had to eat them—"

"And while he was there, sir, he saw someone come to the study and write on Tom's Latin paper," said Manners.

"Don't you tell him who it was!" shrieked Trimble. "I should get into a fearful row if I say—"

"Silence, Trimble!" said Mr. Linton. The expression on the face of the master of the Shell was altering very much now. "You should have played such a thoughtless trick on Trimble Lowther; but never mind that now. Trimble were you actually locked in the cupboard at Merry's study?"

"Oh dear! Yes, sir!" mumbled Baggy.

"Could you see from the cupboard?"

"Oh, yes, sir, through the keyhole!"

"Were you there when I came to the study?"

"You—you—you ain't going to mention it to the Worm, sir—I—I mean, Silverson—that is, Mr. Silverson?" asked Baggy anxiously. "He would lay into a chap, sir."

"Your foolish actions are no concern of Trimble, and I shall say nothing to Mr. Silverson on the subject. I simply desire to know the facts," said Mr. Linton impatiently. "Did you see me when I came to Merry's study?"

"Yes, sir."

"Then why did you not make your presence known?"

"Because you're a beak, sir."

"What?"

"I—I mean, a—a master. I didn't want to be mentioned to Silverson, sir. He whops a fellow every time he gets a chance, and—"

"You saw me in the study?" Mr. Linton understood why Baggy had not drawn his attention to his predicament.

"Yes, sir!" mumbled Baggy.

"Had you seen anyone else enter the study during Merry's absence?"

"You ain't going to tell Mr. Silverson, sir?"

"What? Certainly not! Answer my question."

"Yes, I did, sir."

"I must have proof of this," said Mr. Linton. "If you saw me there, as you say, Trimble, you must remember, and be able to describe my actions. Tell me exactly what you saw."

"Oh, yes, sir!" said Baggy, quite cheerful. As Baggy for once was telling the truth, he had no difficulty. "You tapped at the door and looked in, sir, and said 'Merry!' I suppose you thought he was there."

"That is correct!" said Mr. Linton. "Continue!"

"Then you came in, sir, and scowled."
 "Wha-a-t?"
 "I—I don't mean scowled, sir!" gasped Baggy.
 "I—I mean, you—you looked very stern. Not scowled, sir."

"Go on, you foolish boy!"
 "Then you looked at the paper Tom had tucked on the table, sir, and—and—"
 "Well?"

"Well, I suppose you remember, sir; you looked awfully fierce!" said Baggy. "I—I was quite scared, sir; you looked so jolly fierce!"
 "Is that all, Trimble?"

"Yes, sir, except that you stood looking at it a long time, and then grabbed it up—I don't mean grabbed it, sir; picked it up rather quickly—and went out of the study with it."

The Terrible Three listened to all this in silence. They could see in Mr. Linton's face that it was proved to his satisfaction that Baggy Trimble really had been on the spot. Obviously he could not have described Mr. Linton's actions, as he had done, unless he had been watching him from first to last.

The master of the Shell drew a deep breath.
 "Very well," he said. "Now, Trimble, you say that you saw Merry throw the paper on the table?"

"Yes, sir."
 "Did you see him write anything on it?"
 "No, sir. He never touched it after chucking it down."

"What did he do?"
 "He wouldn't let me out of the cupboard, sir! He said he hadn't the key—"

"Yes, yes! What else?"
 "Nothing else, sir, except that he looked out of the window; and then went out of the study, and I thought perhaps he was going after Lowther for that key, but he didn't."

"Did anything occur after that, Trimble? Did you see anyone else enter the study?"
 "Oh jiminy! Not if you're going to tell Mr. Silverson, sir!" gasped Baggy.

"You utterly stupid boy!" exclaimed Mr. Linton. "I shall not mention you to Mr. Silverson at all."

"Oh, all right, sir!" said Baggy, comforted. "I know you'd keep your word, sir. You ain't like Silverson. If you ain't going to mention me to him, sir—"

"Certainly not! Now answer my question. Did you see some person enter Merry's study during his absence?"

"Yes, sir."
 "Did you see what he did?"

"Oh, yes, sir! He picked up the pen, and wrote something on Tom's paper. I couldn't see what it was, of course, but I saw him write it. I couldn't make it out, but I knew it must be something pretty annoying when you came in afterwards and saw it, and looked so jolly fierce!"

Mr. Linton's eyes were keenly fixed on Baggy's fat face as he spluttered out his statement.

"You saw this person clearly, Trimble? You saw him write on Merry's paper, in Merry's absence, though you did not see what he wrote?"

"Yes, sir."
 "His name?"

"I—I'd rather not tell you his name, sir," stammered Baggy. "I might get into a fearful row—"

"I require to know the name of the boy who, according to your statement, played a mean

trick that might have led to Merry's expulsion from this school, Trimble."

"But it wasn't a boy, sir!" gasped Baggy.
 "It was not a boy!" repeated Mr. Linton blankly. "What do you mean, Trimble?"

"I—I—I'd rather not say, sir!" moaned Baggy. "If—if Mr. Silverson found out—"

"Mr. Silverson would naturally desire you to make a frank statement on the subject, Trimble."

"Oh jiminy! Would he?" gasped Baggy.
 "Certainly he would. Now, Trimble, you will either answer my question, or I shall take you to your headmaster, and you will answer Dr. Holmes," said the master of the Shell sternly.

"I—I—I don't mind answering, sir, if—if you won't let Mr. Silverson know that I said anything—"

"Certainly I shall not! Now tell me at once the name of the person you saw write on Merry's Latin paper?"

"It—it—it was—was—" Baggy seemed unable to get it out.

"Who?"
 "Mr. Silverson, sir!"
 Baggy got it out at last.

JAMES GETS A JOLT!

THERE was a dead silence in Mr. Linton's study after Baggy Trimble had exploded that bombshell.

The master of the Shell stood thunderstruck. Tom Merry, Manners, and Lowther stood silent, exchanging glances. The silence was deep, and it seemed to last an age.

It was broken by Baggy Trimble's quavering voice. The look on Mr. Linton's face scared the fat Baggy.

"I—I say, sir, you—you've promised not to tell Mr. Silverson I said so. He would take my skin off if he knew I'd seen him. I—I don't know what he wrote on the paper, sir. I—I suppose it was some joke, as it made you look so fierce afterwards. But—but he's got such a jolly bad temper, sir. He would whop me fearfully if he knew I'd seen him sneaking into Tom Merry's study, sir—"

Baggy's voice trailed away.
 Still Mr. Linton did not speak. He seemed stunned by what he had heard.

He could see that Baggy did not know what had been written on the paper, and did not know what had been done, or why it had been done. Baggy was simply mystified by what he had seen, and could not make head or tail of it, but he had a well-founded apprehension that Silverson would "take it out" of him if he knew.

The master of the Shell found his voice at last. "Merry, Manners, Lowther, leave my study! I request you to say nothing on this subject!"

"Yes, sir," said Manners quietly.

"Merry, the matter is at an end, so far as you are concerned. I regret that I judged you unjustly, owing to—circumstances. Please leave my study now."

Tom Merry, Manners, and Lowther left the study.

Trimble remained—to be closely questioned for a good ten minutes by the master of the Shell. After which Baggy was dismissed, happy in the certainty that his name was not going to be mentioned to Silverson.

Mr. Linton, left alone, paced the study for some minutes, his brow dark. At length he

(Continued on page 36.)

READ HOW UNCLE MARMADUKE IS HAUNTED BY HIS OWN BUMPTIOUS CHARACTER

TOLD IN THE TUCKSHOP!



THE CLUB BORE.

THE time was the half-hour before afternoon school, and, as usual, the tuckshop at Greystones was crowded.

"You know," remarked Dawson of the Fifth, balancing himself perilously on his stool, "I can't help thinking there's something in the saying which old Blenkinsop was quoting in Form this morning. You know how it goes—something about 'Wad the power some giftie gie us to see ourselves as others see us.'"

"What's it mean, anyway?" demanded his bosom pal Potts.

Russell major surveyed him pityingly.

"It means, my dear, good ass," he said, "that it's a pity we haven't got the gift of seeing ourselves as others see us. And I agree with Dawson. It is a pity—a dashed pity! For instance, if that conceited snob Derlinger could see himself as we see him, he wouldn't go about giving himself airs because of his family's wealthy connections."

"Yes, and there are a lot more in the school who'd change their tune pretty quickly if they could see themselves as we see them," took up Fox. "Look at Ponsonby, for instance. If the poor chump could only see what a howling ass he makes of himself every time he gets up at the debating society meetings, he'd stick to cricket and football."

"Exactly!" put in Goffin, the new boy. "The phrase which Dawson quoted, 'Oh, wad the power some giftie gie us to see oursel's as others see us,' applies to all of us, and would, I think, prove a chastening experience. And talking of

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By GEO. E. ROCHESTER.

This Week's Story:

THE INVISIBLE DOUBLE!

that," he went on, surveying the company with his honest blue eyes, "I am reminded of a most extraordinary occurrence which befell my Uncle Marmaduke. It was one of the most amazing experiences of which you've ever heard. You wish to hear about it?"

"Oh, no, we don't," interposed a voice bluntly.

But Goffin ignored the interruption. "The story of my Uncle Marmaduke," he said firmly.

At the time of which I'm speaking (said Goffin) my Uncle Marmaduke had just returned from a holiday abroad. He was a big, pompous sort of man, and had a prosperous business in the City. His voice can best be described as rich and fruity, and when he spoke he always gave you the impression he was delivering a lecture, no matter what the subject under discussion might be.

Whilst abroad, Uncle Marmaduke had had a rather peculiar little adventure. Strolling through an Eastern bazaar one day, he had thrown his walking-stick at a mad dog which was making a bee line for an aged fakir. More by good luck than judgment, the walking-stick bowled the dog over, and the aged fakir was so grateful to Uncle Marmaduke that that evening he arrived round at Uncle Marmaduke's hotel and asked to see him.

When Uncle Marmaduke had graciously granted the old chap an audience, the latter produced a small white pill which he offered to Uncle Marmaduke.

"...is a pill of wondrous power, O Excellency,"
 "for when thou hast taken it thou wilt
 thyself even as thy fellow men see thee, and
 so high-born and noble as thee such know-
 may be of vast and boundless value, in
 wilt enable thee so to direct thy steps that
 wilt find added favour in the eyes of all

mean that it will enable me to see my own
 failings, and make an effort to adjust them?"
 Uncle Marmaduke, with his rich, fruity
 "Well, well! I flatter myself that I
 so few that they never worry me. However,
 much obliged to you, all the same. Ha, ha!
 evening!"

that he dismissed the aged fakir, and
 the pill into his waistcoat pocket,
 fully forgot all about it until one day when
 sitting in his club in London, shortly be-
 lunch.

Uncle Marmaduke was seated in an armchair,
 reading a morning newspaper and idly fishing in
 his waistcoat pocket for one of the indigestion
 pills he invariably took before lunch, when his
 eyes closed on the little white pill given him
 by the fakir.

When he found it out, Uncle Marmaduke looked at it
 and laughed amusedly in rich, mellow tones.

"Wonder!" he murmured, recalling the fakir's
 "Pooh, what nonsense! I'll wager it's
 of sugar or something!"

He had found his newspaper somewhat boring,
 and sat there looking at the little white pill,
 turning it over in his fingers; then, with
 an amused laugh at his own foolishness, he
 put it into his mouth and swallowed it.

He had known all along, nothing at all
 changed. He felt no different at all, but just
 there in his chair; and the only chance he
 of seeing himself as other men saw him was
 in the mirrors in the dining-room.

Anything interesting in the paper this morn-
 ing, Goffin?" asked a smallish, neatly dressed
 member, Timpkins, who was standing by
 the fire.

"No, nothing," began Uncle Marmaduke, lean-
 ing farther back in his chair and placing the tips
 of his plump, well-kept fingers together; "but the
 policy of the Government in tackling war prob-
 lems is beyond belief—absolutely beyond belief.
 If I were in Parliament—I repeat, if I were
 in Parliament—"

Suddenly he broke off, staring in mild surprise
 at a big, pompous-looking, well-dressed gentleman
 who had just entered the room. There was some-
 thing vaguely familiar to Uncle Marmaduke
 in the newcomer, and he fancied he had met
 him somewhere before; but for the life of him
 couldn't recall his name.

Walking to the fireplace, the stranger elbowed
 Timpkins aside, picked up Uncle Marmaduke's
 newspaper from the latter's knee, and
 read in a rich, fruity voice:

"Waitah! Heah, waitah!"

"Yes, sir?" said the club-room waiter, hasten-
 ing up.

"The usual, please!" ordered the newcomer
 lightly. "And kindly see that I'm not kept
 waiting!"

Catching Timpkins' eye, Uncle Marmaduke
 motioned him with a movement of his head.

"Who is that fellow?" he muttered.

"Oh, him!" murmured Timpkins. "That's
 Bouncer, the most unpopular member in the club.
 Don't you know him?"

"No, I can't say I do, although I seem to have
 met him somewhere before," muttered Uncle
 Marmaduke. "But he's well named—Bouncer.
 He looks full of bounce to me."

"Oh, he is—absolutely full of it!" agreed
 Timpkins.

"I take the strongest possible exception to the
 manner in which he shoved you away from the
 fire," went on Uncle Marmaduke indignantly,
 "and I shall certainly complain to the secretary
 about the insolent manner in which the fellow
 appropriated my newspaper."

"Oh, he's like that, and the secretary's sick to
 death of hearing complaints about him," said
 Timpkins.

He broke off as Bouncer, rustling his news-
 paper, looked over the top of it and said:

"Aw, tell me, Timpkins. Did you buy that
 suit from a tailor, or did you have it cut down
 for you?"

"I bought it from my tailor," said Timpkins,
 flushing.

"Then he ought to be shot for selling it!" an-
 nounced Bouncer. "Or you ought to be put in
 a home for buying it. Ha, ha!"

He gave a rich, fruity laugh which again was
 vaguely familiar to Uncle Marmaduke, then
 turned and took a glass from the tray proffered
 by the waiter.

"How much?" he demanded.

"One shilling, sir, please," said the waiter.

"Pah! The price is ridiculous—far too much!"
 exploded Bouncer. "I don't know why I come
 here at all. A shilling for a miserable little
 appetiser like this! What the committee do with
 the money I don't know. They certainly don't
 spend it on the club!"

He forked out a shilling and handed it over;
 then, turning to Timpkins again, he went on:

"As I was saying, Timpkins, the stupidity of
 the Government in tackling war problems is
 beyond belief—absolutely beyond belief. Now, if
 I were in Parliament—I repeat, if I were in
 Parliament—I know what I'd do. I'd soon stop
 this confounded Hitler's monkey tricks, I tell
 you!"

"Then why the dickens don't you get into
 Parliament and do it instead of gassing about
 it?" snapped Timpkins, turning away and walk-
 ing into the dining-room, followed by Uncle
 Marmaduke.

"Pon my word, Timpkins, I've never heard
 such a bombastic fellow, hanged if I have!"
 exclaimed Uncle Marmaduke. "Who the
 dickens does he think he is; I wonder?"

"He thinks he's everybody," replied Timpkins.
 "He's the most conceited ass I've ever met. Oh
 lor', here he comes! I hope to goodness he
 doesn't sit at our table."

But Bouncer did sit at their table. Picking
 up the menu he read carefully through it,
 grumbling at the fare and at the price charged
 for it. Then, having given his order and
 monopolised the cruet, he spread his elbows on
 the table and proceeded to monopolise the con-
 versation, until Uncle Marmaduke could have
 brained him with the sauce bottle.

Bouncer's voice never seemed to stop. It droned
 on and on, and the conversation was all about
 himself, and about what he'd said to so-and-so,
 and about how he'd got the better of so-and-so,
 and how he'd run the country if he was in the
 Government.

In fact, the "I's" flashed past as quickly as
 telegraph-poles flash past when you're in an

express train. At length Uncle Marmaduke could stand no more of it, so, getting to his feet, he quitted the dining-room and walked into the billiards-room, where several of the members were playing, whilst others were watching.

They were all so engrossed in the game that no one took any notice of Uncle Marmaduke, but suddenly someone muttered, with a sort of groan in his voice:

"Oh gosh; here comes Bouncer!"

Turning his head, Uncle Marmaduke saw the insufferable Bouncer entering the room.

"Well, well; having a hundred up?" said Bouncer heartily. "Hallo, Williams, how are you? Have you paid Simpson that fiver yet that you owe him? Ha, ha! You're not what you'd call a good payer, is he, Simpson?"

"I wish you'd keep quiet whilst I'm playing a stroke!" snapped one of the players angrily.

"That's all right, Jobson, don't try to blame your rotten play on me!" laughed Bouncer. "The trouble with you is you don't hold the cue properly. I've always said so, and always will say so. You'll never make a player, I'm afraid, Jobson. You remind me of a fellow I once met in New York. This fellow fancied himself no end, and wanted to give me a hundred up. I took him on, of course, and it was absolute slaughter. I never had an easier game in my life, and that's saying something. This fellow held his cue exactly the same way as you, Jobson. Quite amateurish, you know—"

"Will you be quiet!" cut in another of the players furiously.

"That'll do, Polson!" snapped Bouncer.

"Don't you speak to me like that. I pay my subscription the same as you, but mine is paid up, which is more than can be said about yours, I'll wager. Ha, ha! That one got home, didn't it, what? Why on earth you fellows don't pay your subscriptions when they fall due, I don't know. I'm quite aware, of course, that money must be tight with a lot of you because of the war, but, after all, you ought to be able to find enough to pay club subscriptions. I was talking to a member of the committee about it just the other day. I gave him some pretty sound advice on this subscription question. What I said to him was this—"

The voice droned on and on, and one by one the members who had been watching the game drifted away, the group melting like snow before the sun.

"I don't know why a fellow like that isn't expelled from the club!" cried Uncle Marmaduke furiously, barging his way into the reading-room. "I've never encountered such an utter bore during the whole course of my life. Thank goodness one can escape from him here!"

Seating himself in an armchair, he folded his hands across his chest, as was his usual after-luncheon custom, and drifted off into slumber. How long he had slept, he didn't know, but it couldn't have been more than a few minutes, when he was suddenly awakened by a noise which was a cross between the blaring of a foghorn and the furious trumpeting of a rogue elephant.

Glaring across at the adjoining chair, Uncle Marmaduke crimsoned with rage as he saw Bouncer seated in it, snoring lustily.

"By George, but this is too much!" exploded Uncle Marmaduke furiously, leaping to his feet and glaring at the blissfully recumbent form of Bouncer. "I can't stand any more of this. I'm going, and I shall not come back here again so

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long as this person remains a member of the club!"

With that he flung savagely away his cloak-room, collected his hat, coat, and umbrella and barged out of the club. He had a business appointment that afternoon, and deciding to get it over he hailed a taxi and was driven rapidly away.

THE LOST CONTRACT.

UNCLE MARMADUKE'S business appointment was with a very rich financier named Clarkson (continued Goffin), and if all went well Uncle Marmaduke hoped to land a commission which would put a cool twenty thousand pounds in his own pocket.

So reaching Clarkson's office, he paid off his taxi, and switching on his most gracious smile was ushered into the great man's presence.

"How are you, Goffin?" said Clarkson, shaking hands. "You've called about the contract, of course? Will you sit down?"

Well, just as Uncle Marmaduke was about to sit down a most astonishing thing happened. The door of the office opened and who should walk in just as cool as you please, but Bouncer. What was more, without the slightest word of apology Bouncer pushed Uncle Marmaduke aside and seated himself in the chair Uncle Marmaduke had been about to use.

Uncle Marmaduke was rendered so absolutely speechless with rage at this latest impertinence of Bouncer's that he could only stand choking and spluttering and glowering at Bouncer, who was sitting looking at Clarkson with the most sheepish grin on his face that Uncle Marmaduke had ever seen.

What was just as astonishing as Bouncer's entrance into the office, however, was the fact that Clarkson was making not the slightest effort to have the fellow thrown out. Instead, leaning back in his chair, he said quite calmly to Bouncer:

"Now tell me just what your proposition is with regard to this contract?"

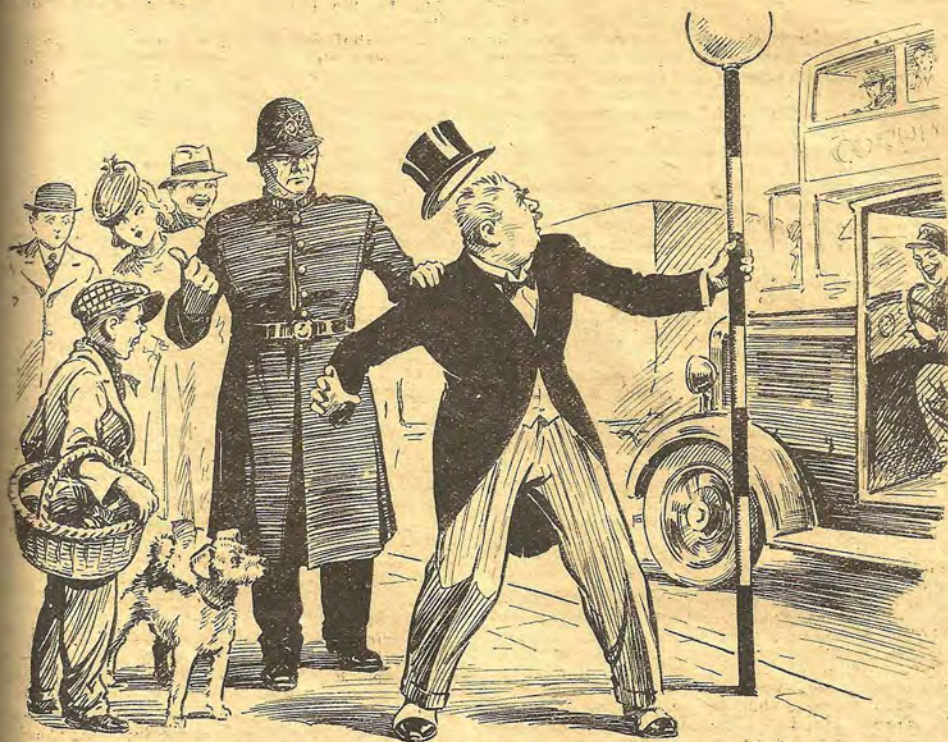
In response to this invitation Bouncer commenced to talk, and as the dumbfounded Uncle Marmaduke listened he realised the horrible fact that the contract Bouncer and Clarkson were discussing was the very contract he himself had come here to fix up.

So great was Uncle Marmaduke's anger and bewilderment that he couldn't utter a word. He tried to speak, but all he could do was to utter odd throaty sounds of which neither Bouncer nor Clarkson took the slightest notice whatsoever. In fact, for all the notice either of them were taking of Uncle Marmaduke he might just as well have not been in the office at all.

Well, one thing was very certain, thought Uncle Marmaduke with savage satisfaction, and that was that the insufferable Bouncer wouldn't discuss the contract, not if he talked for a month on Sundays.

The fellow's talk was absolutely futile, in his manner so fawning as to be almost laughable. There he was, sitting there with an idiotic grin on his face, talking the most utter drivel that Uncle Marmaduke had ever listened to.

It was quite obvious to Uncle Marmaduke from the start that Bouncer hadn't the faintest idea how to approach a man like Clarkson. Instead of discussing the contract lucidly and intelligently, Bouncer was talking about his business and about himself, and about what a marvellous business man he was, and about how he'd



"This scoundrel's coming with me!" said Uncle Marmaduke, turning to Bouncer. As he did so, he received a stunning shock—for it wasn't Bouncer he was holding at all, but the iron post of a Belisha beacon!

so much out of this contract and so much out of that, and the fool even went so far as to hint to Clarkson that the latter should think himself jolly lucky a firm like Bouncer's was prepared to handle the contract.

Looking at Clarkson, Uncle Marmaduke could see that the man was getting fed-up to the back teeth with Bouncer. He kept fidgeting about in his chair and playing with a pencil, and trying now and again to get a word in edgeways, but he couldn't because the hateful voice of Bouncer droned on and on just like the incessant buzzing of some huge, nightmarish bee.

Uncle Marmaduke says that Bouncer's droning voice got so on his nerves that at length he felt certain that he himself was going mad. He says he began to get the impression that Bouncer really was some sleek, gigantic bee, sitting there in the chair droning away about what a marvellous fellow he was, and what a hive of industry he controlled, and about how everything would move as sweet as honey if Clarkson gave him the contract.

Uncle Marmaduke says he never really knew until that afternoon the capacity of the human heart for hatred. He says that it really shocked him to realise how much he hated the odious Bouncer, as he watched him sitting there talking the most utter bilge to a gentleman like Clarkson, and he says he wonders to this day how Clarkson stuck it so long.

But at length it appeared that even the long-suffering Clarkson could stand it no more, for suddenly he rose abruptly to his feet and said:

"Thank you very much! I am obliged to you for calling. I will let you know my decision, but to save you any possible disappointment I think I should tell you that I have practically decided to place the contract with Messrs. Merryweather & Merryweather. Good-afternoon!"

Merryweather & Merryweather, thought Uncle Marmaduke wildly. They were his bitterest rivals. And they were going to get the Clarkson contract.

"Mr. Clarkson!" exclaimed Uncle Marmaduke. "Mr. Clarkson, I beg of you to hear me!"

Clarkson stared at him coldly.

"I have already heard you," he said. "Surely there can be nothing more you have to say?"

"But I haven't said anything at all yet!" said Uncle Marmaduke, absolutely aghast. "It's this fool here who's been doing all the talking!"

He pointed to the chair. As he did so his jaw dropped and his eyes nearly popped out of his head. For the chair was empty, and Bouncer had gone.

"Well, I never!" gasped Uncle Marmaduke. "I never saw him go!"

"Saw who go?" inquired Clarkson, staring at him curiously.

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"Why, the drivelling imbecile who was sitting in that chair," stammered Uncle Marmaduke. "Drivelling imbecile is right," agreed Clarkson coldly.

He pressed a bell. In response a secretary appeared.

"Show this gentleman out, please," said Clarkson.

"But, Mr. Clarkson," began Uncle Marmaduke wildly. "You don't understand—I don't understand. There's something very queer here—"

"Will you kindly go, Mr. Goffin?" rapped Clarkson.

Like a man in a daze, Uncle Marmaduke permitted himself to be escorted from the office. He was so bewildered and dumbfounded that he says that to this day he doesn't know how he reached the pavement outside. But he suddenly found himself standing there, and who should be within a few paces of him, hailing a taxi, but Bouncer.

Pulling himself together, Uncle Marmaduke rushed up to Bouncer and grabbed him by the arm.

"Scoundrel!" he roared. "You stole my interview. You sat there and talked such utter balderdash that you talked Clarkson into giving the contract to Merryweather & Merryweather. I never had a chance to talk to him myself, confound you!"

He broke off as a heavy hand was laid on his shoulder. Turning, he found himself looking into the grim visage of a police constable.

"Now then, now then, we can't have this!" said the policeman gruffly. "What's the matter with you, anyway?"

"This rascal has been the means of my losing a contract worth twenty thousand pounds to me!" said Uncle Marmaduke passionately, still keeping his grip on Bouncer's arm.

The policeman grinned.

"Well, it's a new one on me," he observed. "Now you clear off, or I'll have to take you along to the station. Go on, off you go!"

"Yes, and this scoundrel's coming with me!" said Uncle Marmaduke furiously, turning to Bouncer.

As he did so he received another stunning shock, for it wasn't Bouncer he was holding at all, but the iron post of a Belisha beacon!

"Well, I'll—I'll be jiggered!" he gasped, goggling pop-eyed at the beacon.

"Are you going to move on, or aren't you?" demanded the policeman grimly. "I won't warn you again."

"Yes—yes, I'm going!" stammered Uncle Marmaduke. "I'll—I'll get a taxi. I'm rather unwell, I'm afraid!"

THE REAL BOUNCER.

UNCLE MARMADUKE hailed a taxi, climbed in, and was driven off to his office, his head in a complete whirl. He could have sworn on oath that it had been Bouncer whom he'd grabbed, but it had turned out to be nothing but a Belisha beacon.

"Surely I cannot be suffering from hallucinations!" groaned Uncle Marmaduke. "But, alas, I fear I must be!"

Arriving at his office, he opened the outer door of the main room. As he did so he stiffened in amazement, for who should be striding up and down the office but Bouncer. The fellow's hands were clapping and unclapping behind his back in

an excellent imitation of a habit of Uncle Marmaduke's when angry, and he was tearing off at a scared-looking staff.

"Yes, we've lost the contract, I tell you," thundered. "And whose fault is it? Not mine, by George! Don't think that. I do my best. I was a slave from early morning until late at night, when I'm cursed with a staff composed of inefficient imbeciles and lunatics, how can I expect to land a contract such as Clarkson's? This is the last straw. I'm going to make drastic changes here, and I'm going to make them at once. You're under a week's notice, the lot of you. I've been too lenient with you—much too lenient—but I'll show you whether or not there's a confounded rest home for idiots. Pah! Good with your work."

With that he flung into the inner office and slammed the door. Recovering from his petulant astonishment, Uncle Marmaduke rushed through the outer office and whipped open the door of his inner sanctum. As he did so he felt his heart reel about him, for the office was deserted and Bouncer had gone.

Yet where could he have gone? The window was closed and was latched on the inside. Moreover, it was four stories up. Certainly Bouncer hadn't vanished via the window. Sitting weakly into the chair at his desk, Uncle Marmaduke pressed the bell. In response to the summons, Johnson, the head clerk, appeared, looking pale and nervous.

"Tell me, Johnson," said Uncle Marmaduke weakly, "am I imagining things, or did I see someone come in here just now—someone who was shouting at you and the rest of the staff in the outer office there?"

Johnson stared at him; puzzled.

"No one came in here except yourself, sir," said. Then added hastily: "At least, no one whom I saw, sir!"

"But—but that fellow who was kicking at the row out there about losing the Clarkson contract—stammered Uncle Marmaduke. "Surely he was in here, Johnson."

"But, sir, that was you," said Johnson, staring at him in alarm. "Don't you remember, sir? You were very angry at losing the Clarkson contract and you've given us all a week's notice."

Uncle Marmaduke stared at him aghast. "Very sanity, he felt, was in the balance."

"Very well, Johnson," he gulped. "That's all for just now!"

Waiting until Johnson had withdrawn, Uncle Marmaduke sat slumped in his chair, going fully over the events of that fateful day. He was putting on his hat and overcoat again, he opened the office and was driven in a taxi to his club.

"Is Mr. Timpkins in?" he asked the cloak-room attendant.

"Yes, sir; he hasn't collected his hat and coat yet, sir," answered the attendant.

Uncle Marmaduke hesitated, then asked slowly and quietly:

"Tell me, do you know a member of this club named Bouncer?"

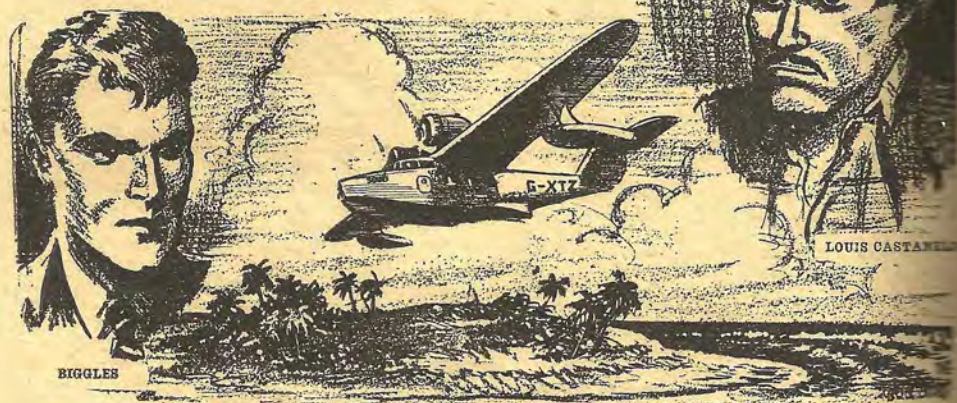
The cloak-room attendant started violently, coloured, and said hastily:

"No, sir, no! I don't know any member of that name, sir!"

"But there is a member named Bouncer," persisted Uncle Marmaduke. "I met him at lunch to-day and nearly all the members appeared to know him. He's a gentleman of fine build, but a perfect pest of a fellow. Are you sure you don't know him?"

THERE ARE THRILLS THROUGHOUT THE FINAL CHAPTERS OF—

BIGGLES' SOUTH SEA ADVENTURE!



By CAPTAIN W. E. JOHNS.

TURNING THE TABLES!

THERE came a sound of distant shouting. Castanelli evidently heard it, for he looked round over his shoulder. When he turned his face back to the grotto the smile was no longer on it. Showing his teeth in a snarl of animal rage, he hurled the stick of dynamite straight at Ginger. It sped through the air, leaving a trail of grey smoke behind it.

Ginger watched it, fascinated. He could see that, even if it did not actually hit him, it would fall on the ledge. His first inclination was to jump into the water, for there was no room to run.

Then he saw that the dynamite would hit Full Moon, and his reaction was instinctive. Like a cricketer taking a catch, he jumped forward, and allowed the stick to fall into his hand. Instantly he hurled it back at the hole whence it came.

There was no time to think, for as the dynamite showed for a moment against the blue sky there was a terrific explosion, and the next moment he was on his knees, shielding his head from the falling debris. Ginger dragged Full Moon towards him, and did his best to protect her with his body. The air was full of smoke and the noise of falling coral.

Brushing the dust from his streaming eyes, he tried to see what was happening. It was not easy, for the whole shape of the grotto had altered. Pieces of the wall and the roof were still falling, and as they fell into the water it rose accordingly, so that their ledge was awash.

Ginger only saw these things vaguely, for in the horror of the moment it seemed as if the whole world was crumbling to pieces about him. He could still hear shouts outside, but he could see nobody, so he had no idea what was happening. But presently the smoke began to clear, and he could see more plainly what had happened to the grotto. Most of the roof had disappeared,

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so that he and Full Moon were, so to speak, on the bottom of a rough basin, the sides being composed of coral, some of which was cracked, and only needed a touch to bring it down. In fact, the whole place appeared likely to cave in at any moment. Of Castanelli there was no sign.

Ginger caught Full Moon by the hand. "Let's try to get out," he said tersely. "If any more coral falls we shall be buried."

But Full Moon only stood like one transfixed, listening, with parted lips and shining eyes. Then suddenly she let out a blood-curdling yell, and, thrusting her knife into the fold of her pareu, started climbing up the wall towards the open air.

"Be careful! You'll bring the whole place down on us!" yelled Ginger.

But for once Full Moon ignored Ginger's frantic appeal. She went on climbing, heedless of falling rocks, from time to time uttering a piercing cry, not unlike those which could sometimes be heard in the distance.

Altogether, she gave Ginger the impression of having suddenly gone out of her mind. That the shock of the explosion had affected her brain was quite possible; he reflected.

Prompted by the fear of what Castanelli might do when she reached the top, he again yelled to her to stop; but, although she acknowledged his appeal by shouting something in her own language, she went on climbing. In the circumstances, all he could do was to follow her.

It was certain that something had happened outside, but apart from the possibility of Castanelli having been killed or disabled by stick of dynamite which he had thrown, Ginger could not imagine what it was.

Full Moon was already more than half-way up the coral wall, so he exerted every ounce of strength he possessed in order to overtake her.

at least get to the top at the same time. And this he was successful, for he found a comparatively easy way up, whereas Full Moon had stood at the wall without troubling to ascertain the least difficult course.

Nevertheless, the coral often broke under Ginger's weight, and more than once he thought was bound to fall; but somehow he managed to hang on, and heedless of torn finger-nails, dragged himself over the rim.

Full Moon was still six feet below, looking only for a way up, for she had come to an impasse. By lying down Ginger could just reach her hand; this was all the support she needed, and a few seconds she was lying beside him, gasping for breath and wiping the coral-dust from her eyes with the hem of her pareu.

The strain of the last minute had been so intense that Ginger had temporarily forgotten Castanelli and his islanders, but now, remembering them, he looked round to see what was happening.

Near at hand lay two of the Solomon Island boys, terribly mutilated, apparently by the explosion. But it was not this that made Ginger feel unbelievably. The whole island seemed to be swarming with hideously painted warriors, who yelled like madmen as they chased the scattered members of Castanelli's crew.

And this was not all. The Scud, with her port wing-tip fractured and hanging loose, so that the top of it trailed in the water, was floating at an alarming angle on the lagoon. More painted warriors were even then jumping out of the cabin doorway into the water.

Others were swimming at an incredible speed towards a long, sleek canoe, which was being paddled towards three swimmers who were making for the schooner. Ginger knew from their tops of hair that two of them were members of Castanelli's crew; the other, swimming much more slowly, was Castanelli himself.

Ginger was completely bewildered. He could not make out what was happening. All he could think was that the Scud had returned, only to be attacked by a swarm of native warriors who had arrived simultaneously in the war canoe. And this, it must be admitted, was a reasonable assumption.

Ginger perceived also that if his reading of the situation was correct, he and Full Moon were likely to be the next victims; yet even in these alarming circumstances he was distracted by a tremendous hubbub that arose from the lagoon.

The position was very much the same as when he had first emerged from the grotto, except that the two Islanders had succeeded in reaching the schooner before being overtaken by the canoe, which had swung round to intercept Castanelli. But it was not this that had caused the outcry. The canoe was no longer being paddled; it still had a certain amount of way on it, but all the warriors were standing up, the better to see something that was happening in the water. It was they who had caused the uproar by their shouting.

Ginger watched, although as yet he could see nothing to justify the commotion. In fact, he wondered why the paddlers had desisted in their efforts to prevent Castanelli from reaching the schooner. But when the water near the swimming man was suddenly broken by the dreadful triangular fin which he knew so well, he understood. There was no need for them to trouble further. The shark would do what they intended

doing, and at the same time relieve them of the responsibility of the Corsican's death.

With his heart stone cold inside him, and his eyes still on that formidable dorsal fin, Ginger began running towards the beach.

The fin disappeared, and the swimmer, with a terrible cry, thrashed the water with his legs. If by this means he hoped to frighten the shark, he appeared to be successful, for again the huge fish broke the surface, its fin cutting a curving white wake in the water.

Again Castanelli struck out for the schooner. The canoe was only a short distance away, and it was obvious that those in it could save the wretched swimmer if they would; but it was equally obvious that they had no intention of doing so; for they only leaned on their paddles, shouting jeers and taunts at the luckless man in the water.

Ginger reached the edge of the lagoon and pulled up dead. He felt that he was going mad, yet he could not tear his eyes from the awful drama that was being enacted before him.

"Mako, he plenty kai-kai Atanelli," said a voice at his elbow.

He glanced round and saw that it was Full Moon. Her eyes were shining with delight and satisfaction.

"These Kanakas plenty kai-kai us presently," Ginger replied curtly, but Full Moon's only answer was a ripple of laughter.

Ginger turned back to the lagoon in time to see the finish of the tragedy. Castanelli was now very close to the schooner, swimming fast and making a tremendous splash with his feet. It looked as if he would escape, after all.

The warriors in the canoe evidently thought so, too, for they suddenly dropped into their seats and began paddling furiously towards the ship. But the shark also appeared to realise that its prey was about to escape. The fin disappeared, and the water swirled as it closed over it.

Castanelli clutched at a trailing rope and began to pull himself clear, but he was exhausted, and could only hang helplessly, trying to lift his legs above the surface of the water. There came a dark streak near the schooner's side; a terrible scream that was cut off short, and Castanelli disappeared.

Ginger moistened his lips. He was trembling violently and felt sick. Through it all he had an increasing feeling that this was not really happening, that it was all a dream; either that, or he had been killed by the explosion in the grotto. He was prepared to believe anything, however fantastic.

Ginger saw the canoe surge up to the schooner, and the warriors began to scramble up her side: a shot rang out, and one of the warriors fell back with a splash. The others went on. Wild yells rent the air.

Ginger turned to Full Moon, who was watching the scene quite unmoved.

"Where these boys come from?" he asked, as a suspicion slowly took shape in his mind.

"Shell Breaker, he come," murmured Full Moon briefly.

The sound of running footsteps behind him made Ginger turn quickly. A warrior was racing towards them, brandishing a club. Had Full Moon not warned him who it was he would have thought that the end had really come at last.

As the warrior drew nearer Ginger saw that the girl was right. Behind a grinning mask of

white clay he recognised the features of Shell Breaker. He was laughing.

"Plenty finish all time," he shouted joyfully as he ran up.

"Where's Andy?" asked Ginger.

Shell Breaker pointed. Ginger spun round and looked in the direction indicated, which was towards the Scud. So taken up had he been in watching Castanelli's dreadful end that he had forgotten all about the flying-boat.

When Ginger had last seen it it was—or he had thought it was—in the hands of the warriors. Somehow it had not occurred to him that Biggles and the others might be there, too; but now, to his unspeakable astonishment, he saw Biggles, Algy and Sandy standing on the centre section.

They waved to him when they saw that he was looking in their direction. Had Ginger but known it they had been yelling at him for the last five minutes, but what with the pandemonium made by the warriors, and the drama in the water, he had not heard them.

As soon as he realised that they were really there, Ginger dashed along the beach until he was as near as he could get to the flying-boat. Nothing would have induced him to swim out to it, for it was nearly two hundred yards away; so he could only stand on the edge of the lagoon beckoning furiously.

He had just remembered the pearls, and was afraid of what the warriors might do. For he had grasped the truth at last—that Biggles and the war canoe had arrived together, and that the warriors were Marquesans from Rutuona.

Biggles was shouting, pointing first towards the schooner and then to the beach, as if he could not make up his mind which way to go. Ginger could not hear what he said, so he beckoned again frantically. He wiped the perspiration from his blood-streaked face with relief as the Scud's engine started, and the machine began taxiing slowly towards him.

Not until it was twenty yards from the beach did Biggles cut out the engines, so that at last Ginger could make himself heard. And by that time he knew it was too late, for smoke was pouring from the schooner's portholes and hatches, and the natives were jumping clear into the water. The canoe picked up the warriors, and the paddlers backed away from the burning ship.

Biggles was saying something, but Ginger did not listen.

"The pearls! The pearls!" he yelled. "The pearls are on the schooner. Castanelli found them!"

Too late, those on board the flying-boat understood. Ginger dashed into the water and scrambled aboard.

"Castanelli found the pearls!" he gasped. "He took them aboard with him! They must be in his cabin!"

Biggles said nothing. He jumped into his seat, and again the engines roared. The Scud whirled round, churning the sea into milky foam, and raced towards the doomed vessel.

But long before they got to it all those on the flying-boat knew that the effort was wasted. The schooner was a sheet of flame from stem to stern. It would have been suicide for anyone who attempted to board her.

Biggles cut the throttle, and the engines died suddenly, so that the Scud floated motionless on the water. Not far away a wild chant rose from the warriors who were packed in the war canoe.

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They were watching the end of the Avarata with the same glee as they had watched the end of the owner.

"Well, that's that!" muttered Sandy in a resigned voice. "I never did have any luck with pearls!" he added, with poignant bitterness.

"Pity you couldn't have got here a bit sooner!" muttered Ginger.

"We should have been here hours ago if we hadn't struck a head wind," put in Biggles quietly.

Ginger smiled grimly.

"I know all about that wind!" he said, realising that it must have been the same breeze that had caused Castanelli to change his plan and throw him overboard before taking advantage of it to get away. "It was nearly the death of me!" he added.

"It was nearly the death of us, with an overloaded machine and a blooming canoe in tow," remarked Algy.

"Well, I did all I could," declared Ginger.

"You look like it!" observed Biggles, regarding him curiously. "You look as if you've been dragged round the reef at the end of a rope!"

"It was worse than that," Ginger told him. "I was dragged down to the bottom of the lagoon at the end of a rope. I'll tell you about that later on."

"You're not seriously hurt, are you?"

Ginger shook his head.

"Only scratches and shock," he replied. "I don't know what happened to you, but when I tell you what we've been through you'll think I'm a prize romancer!"

"You mean, you and Full Moon?"

"Yes."

"Where is she?"

"On the island somewhere. I left her there with Shell Breaker."

"Hallo! There goes the Avarata!" said Algy in a hushed voice, as, with a hiss, the still-burning remains of the doomed schooner slid slowly out of sight under the water.

A cloud of steam rose into the air, and a few pieces of debris floated to the surface; apart from that, there was nothing to show that the schooner had ever existed.

"Yes, and there go our pearls!" remarked Sandy bitterly.

"Wouldn't they be any good if we fished them up?" asked Algy.

Sandy laughed harshly.

"After being in that fire? They'll just be a handful of white lime, that's all."

For a minute or two nothing more was said. They all stood staring sombrely at the spot where the Avarata had disappeared, thinking of the risks and labour that had been in vain.

"Well, I suppose it's no use sitting here moping about it," said Biggles at last. "We might as well have a spot of something to eat while we're here, and then we'll start back for Rutuona."

"We shall have to find out what has happened to Castanelli's boys, too," muttered Sandy. "The whole business will have to be reported to the authorities, of course. As far as Castanelli is concerned—well, he got what he had deserved for a long time, and I don't suppose there'll be many tears shed on his account. I don't know about his crew; they were a bad lot. But the governor at Tahiti will want to know what happened to them, so we had better find out—not that I think there is much doubt about it."

Nobody answered. Once more the engines were

The others were all on their feet. Full Moon looked from one to the other in astonishment; it was clear that she found it difficult to understand why there should be so much fuss over a few pearls. But she grasped the situation.

"Atanelli, he come back for pearls, I reckon," she said again.

"But why didn't you tell me?" asked Ginger. "No time," explained Full Moon. "You plenty dead, I think."

"She means that when Castanelli threw you overboard she forgot all about the pearls," said Biggles.

"Ay, I reckon that's it," agreed Sandy. "We'll soon find out for certain." He turned to Full Moon. "What place you throw tin?" he demanded.

"I show," replied Full Moon, without hesitation.

All was now bustle and excitement. Sandy yelled to Roaring Wave to man the canoe, and they were soon in it, steering according to Full Moon's directions.

At the spot where the schooner had lain at anchor when Ginger had been a prisoner the native girl raised her hand, and the canoe came to a stop. She then got over the side into the water, with her face below the surface, looking first one way and then the other at the bed of the lagoon. Once she turned over again to breathe, paddled a little farther away, and went on with her search.

"What about the shark?" exclaimed Ginger, aghast.

"Look around you," replied Ginger. "You needn't worry. If that mako shows up here he'll be a dead fish before he knows what's hit him."

Ginger looked along the side of the canoe and saw a dozen men, muscles tense, hands on the hilts of their knives, ready to dive into the water the instant danger threatened.

At last Full Moon swam back to the canoe and shook the water from her hair.

"Me see," she said quietly.

For a minute or two she clung to the side of the canoe, breathing deeply, each breath longer than the preceding one. As she exhaled she bent her body like a jack-knife to force all the air from her lungs. Finally, she took an extra deep breath, and, turning head downwards, went down into the depths like an arrow.

Ginger often thought about that moment afterwards, for it was the most dramatic he had ever known. The silent lagoon, the long black canoe with its grotesquely carved prow, and the line of grim, painted faces, with eyes boring into the depths, watching for the dangers they understood only too well. Every man was tense, the muscles rippling under his oiled brown skin.

Suddenly there was a slackening of the tension. Full Moon came into sight, shooting towards the surface, her blue pareu clinging to her lithe body. One arm was upraised. In it she held the tin.

There was a roar from every man in the canoe as she broke the surface. For a little while she clung to the side of the boat, drawing in her breath with that curious whistling sound which Ginger had come to know so well. Then she tossed the tin into the canoe and climbed in herself.

Sandy was on the tin in a flash, and dragged the lid off.

"They're here!" he shouted hoarsely. Biggles smiled.

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"After this trip I shall be ready to do anything," he declared.

In a few minutes they were back on the beach in an atmosphere very different from that of an hour previously. Full Moon was the heroine of the occasion—as indeed she deserved to be.

Sandy held the pearl tin under his arm, declaring that he would not lose sight of it again until the pearls were sold.

"Then let's get back to Rutuona for a start," suggested Biggles. "If we get along right we can be back before dark. The machine is no case to face another hurricane."

So they took their places in the Scud, and Full Moon and Shell Breaker to travel with them. In fact, much to her delight, Full Moon was permitted to sit next to Biggles in the cabin and work the throttle.

The war canoe was taken in tow, and under a azure sky, the Scud, with her engines roaring, surged through the entrance of the lagoon for the last time.

A quarter of an hour later Ginger stood and looked back. All he could see was a tattered palm fronds swinging in the breeze. Even as he watched, they sank below the horizon and in spite of its grim associations it gave him a feeling of sadness to think that he would see the island again.

"I'm coming back here again one day," he told Sandy confidently.

Sandy chuckled.

"That's what we all say," he grinned. "The islands get you that way."

THE END OF THE TRAIL!

THE return of the warriors to Rutuona and Full Moon, and the story of how Castanelli had died, created a sensation which, Roaring Wave declared, demanded a feast to celebrate it, and preparations were begun forthwith. The white men were the guests of honour, and in the glare of many torches the banquet began.

Ginger, seated on a mat between Full Moon and Shell Breaker, was ready for it, for it was a long time since he had eaten anything substantial.

Leaf-plates were provided, and Ginger's plate heaped in turn with pork and popoe, sweet potatoes, shark's sweetbreads, and other delicacies, to say nothing of unlimited quantities of fruits of many sorts. Every time he paused to eat, Full Moon or Shell Breaker would shout "Kai! Kai!" and push more food towards him. Apart from that there was very little talking, for in Polynesia a meal is something to be eaten seriously.

When all had eaten to repletion the guests reclined on their mats, while the children rushed out to eat what was left over, as was their privilege.

Then, in the orange light of the flickering torches, the warriors began to recount their version of the end of the Avarata. Ginger did not hear the finish. Worn out, he retired from the scene, and flopping down on the floor of his hut, was instantly asleep.

It was broad daylight when he awoke, to find that the others had been at work on the machine for several hours, and the job of mending the broken wing nearly complete.

* Popoe is the staple article of food in the Marquesas. It is a sticky, yellow paste manufactured from the fruit of the breadfruit tree.

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By noon they were ready to depart. When they walked down to the beach with their belongings they found all the people of the island gathered there, men, women, and children sitting on the sand. As the white men approached they began singing their moving song of farewell:

"Farewell to you,
You go to a far-distant land.
There you will stay, and you will weep for me.
Ever I shall be here, and my tears will fall
like rain.
The time has come. Farewell."

Many of the singers were sobbing. Full Moon and Shell Breaker, dressed in the flimsy finery they had selected at Biggles' invitation from Low Sing's store, sat apart from the others, weeping unrestrainedly, their pareus lifted to their eyes. Their distress was so touching that it was all Ginger could do to keep his own tears back. He ran over to them and held their hands.

"Kaoha, my friends," he whispered huskily,

"I shall not forget you. One day I shall come back."

They clung to Ginger, imploring him to stay, but the others were calling, and in the end he had to tear himself away. With his eyes misty with tears he ran down the beach and splashed out to the machine.

The engines were started. The cabin door slammed. The engines roared, and the Scud carved a trail of foam across the bay for the last time. As it rose into the air Ginger sat silent at a side window, his heart heavy with grief, taking his last view of Ratuona.

Sandy clapped him on the shoulder.

"Don't worry," he said. "You'll come back. Once you have been to the islands you can't ever forget them, and one day they will call you back."

There is little more to tell. The Scud's first landfall was Tahiti, where Sandy, who knew the
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governor well, made a full report of the loss of the Avarata, and the death of her captain. The others confirmed his statements, which were accepted without question.

Indeed, the governor hinted that in his opinion Castanelli was well out of the way, for his illegal practices, including the selling of liquor to the natives, had been known for some time, but it had been difficult to get evidence to convict him.

Several leading Parisian pearl buyers were in Papeete, and to them Sandy sold most of the pearls, retaining only the very largest, for which he thought Biggles would get a better price in Paris. Nevertheless, those sold on the island not only paid for the entire expedition, but left an ample margin for division among the partners.

Sandy remained in Tahiti, announcing that he

was going to buy a schooner and set out as a trader; but the others suspected that the pearls would be too great for him, and it was more likely that he would fit out his schooner for another raid on the pearl-bed.

By the time they reached Australia the country was too badly in need of a complete overhaul for them to consider flying home in it, so Sandy sold it for what it was worth to an American company. Out of the proceeds he bought tickets for air travel to England.

"It will be a change to sit still and let somebody else do the work," he remarked, with a smile, as they all went aboard.

THE END.

Meet the clowns of Greyfriars again next week in: "HIS BLACK SHEEP BROTHER"

THE SECRET WITNESS!

(Continued from page 23.)

picked up the Latin paper and left the study, and tapped at Mr. Silverson's door.

James Silverson glanced round as he entered.

James was in high feather that evening. He was seated in his armchair, smoking a cigar, with great satisfaction. What was going to happen in the morning was the successful end of James' long and cunning scheming. He had brought it off at last!

But the satisfied smile on James' face died out as he saw the look on Mr. Linton's face—a look of scorn and loathing and freezing contempt that no words could have expressed.

He rose unsteadily to his feet.

Something had gone wrong—he could see that. But what?

Mr. Linton laid the Latin paper on the table.

"I return your handiwork, sir!" he said, in icy tones.

James looked at the paper.

"My—my handiwork, sir!" he stammered. "I fail to understand you! I quite fail—"

"You did not enter Study No. 10 in the Shell this afternoon, and write those insulting words on that Latin paper?" asked Mr. Linton contemptuously.

"I! Really, Mr. Linton—"

"You did not do so, in malicious and cowardly revenge upon a boy whom you have persecuted ever since you came to this school?"

"Mr. Linton, such words as these—" James' face was white.

"Do you deny it, sir?"

"I do! Of course I do! I defy you—to—to—"

"Take care, sir!" said Mr. Linton. "If I place that paper before the headmaster, I am able to produce an eye-witness, sir, who saw

you enter Merry's study, and write those words upon it."

James sank into his armchair. His sagging knees refused to support him. The cigar dropped from his fingers.

He stared at the master of the Shell in unguessed terror.

"Now, sir," said Mr. Linton, "the term is near its end, and your post here as a temporary master ends with the term. I do not desire to cause a scandal in the school; I do not desire to make a sensation here, sir. I shall say nothing of this. I will only warn you, sir, that in any further action—any further base and treacherous action—against that boy of my Form, you will have me to deal with, and that I shall deal with you, sir, without mercy! I shall keep you under my observation, Mr. Silverson!"

Mr. Linton left the study without waiting for an answer.

But James could not have answered him. He sat sagging in the chair, dumb, with fear and dismay in his heart.

There was a more cheery scene in Study No. 10 in the Shell.

Baggy Trimble sat in that study enjoying life.

What it all meant, and what the dickens it was all about, Baggy did not know, but he knew one thing that made his fat heart rejoice. These Shell fellows marched him off to their study, and stood him the spread of his fat life.

Baggy did not know why, and did not care much. Good things piled the table. And Baggy, grinning from one flapping ear to the other, ate and ate and ate till his hospitable hosts really wondered that he did not burst all over the study.

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