

Grand Christmas Number!

THE
GEM
2^D

*Jack Blake's
Christmas
Pudding!*





Blake Answers Back!

Jack Blake's here to answer your letters and deal with your queries. Write to him, c/o THE GEM, Flectway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4. Be as candid as you like—Jack Blake likes a plain speaker, being by nature a John Blunt himself! But keep your letter SHORT.

Eileen Condon, of Camberwell, S.E.5, writes:

Is there any St. Jim's boy from India? Tell Gussy and Talbot I think they're famous! Please excuse writing and spelling.

ANSWER: I got on with both your writing and spelling famously! Yes, Koumi Rao of the New House Fourth hails from India's coral strand. He's "hot stuff" with a cricket ball, and as a boxer makes opponents "perspire"!

J. R. R. W. H., of Kenton, Harrow, writes:

What subject is Skimpole best at? His age? Height? Study number?

ANSWER: Skimpy is at his best on any subject he's allowed to discourse on. He's not as old as he sounds—sixteen, not sixty! Height, 5 ft. 3 in. Shares Study No. 11 with Talbot and Gore.

K. Lockwood, of Hunstanton, Norfolk, asks:

Who's in the school band? Do Racke, Crooke, Trimble, Scrope, Clampe, and Chowle excel in anything besides gambling and smoking?

ANSWER: We've no school band at the moment, though the "happy band" you mention are always "making a song" about not getting their fair share of the limelight. They're all very good "trumpeters"!

Joyce Windmill, of Cricklewood, Willesden Green, typewrites:

Are you handsome? I take it girls can enter this short-word comp? Thank you. Try: Iransubstantiationisticities. Of course their is nothing against saying: Antichurchestablishmentarianism (If you know how). Fancy boys being beaten by a girl!

ANSWER: "Handsom" is as "handsom" does, says the poet! There is nothing Wh? Atcevell apAInSt say?g anYthinNG your typer will let you say?! But you've missed a syllable out of your second long word, if it is a word. Try antiproco-operative-integral-dual-quasi-amplifidelination! Well, why NOT? XXXZ34!-(d@)!"

Eric Lucas, of Snodland, Kent, writes:

When was the first Scouts' Jamboree held? I go to Snodland Central School where the Kent School Sports were held. Maidstone won both shields.

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ANSWER: First Scouts' Jamboree held in 1920 at Olympia, London; thirty countries were represented. I'd like to have seen the sports. You sound as if you're a sport yourself!

BRIEF REPLIES: (Yes, I'm sorry—really, there's so little space.) To Olga Van Reenen, of Capetown, South Africa: When Gussy falls in love (which is alarmingly often) he's always very serious and soulful about it. Luckily he's soon cured as a rule. One day old Gus will make some girl very happy, I'm sure. Plenty of time, though, isn't there? T. D., of Catford: Highest building in the world is the Empire State Building, N.Y. 1,248 feet, I believe. In reply to your query as to who's got the brains in Study No. 6, may I

All You Wish
Yourselves this
Yuletide!

—Jack Blake.

point out we don't just share one lot of brains; we each have our own outfit! Rarest postage stamp is the British Guiana 1 cent. J. Herman, of Capetown, South Africa: Very many thanks for your list of Grammarians you like; hope you go on liking the "Saints" as long again as you've already read about them! That'll make you twice 32 plus 15 or something, won't it? J. Reynolds, Eastleigh, Hants: Yes, the Terrible Three came to St. Jim's from Clavering School. It was quite quiet before that at St. Jim's—almost "terribly" so! X, of Dundee: I might, but I don't see why I should try to best old Figgy in a fight! Yes, I've been to Scotland; for a "cold" country I met with a "warm," friendly reception! English Cup Winners in 1932 were Newcastle United

FIVE GOLDEN SOVEREIGNS HAVE BEEN STOLEN AT ST. JIM'S, BUT THE LAST PLACE THEY WERE SUSPECTED OF BEING HIDDEN WAS IN—



JACK BLAKE'S CHRISTMAS PUDDING!

ONE FOR JAMES!

"CHRISTMAS weather!" remarked Tom Merry.

"Yaas, wathah!" agreed Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

It was! Snow was piled and stacked all over St. Jim's. All night it had been snowing; in the dim December morning it was still snowing. A few feathery flakes were falling when the St. Jim's fellows came out after third school.

Walls and roofs gleamed with white. The old quad was a spotless carpet. Leafless trees glistened with frost. Break-up for Christmas was not far off—but the Christmas weather had arrived early.

Snowballs were whizzing. Figgins & Co. of the New House were in the quad, with snowballs ready for any School House man who came their way. Racke of the Shell, tramping across to the tuckshop, got three, all at once—one from Figgins, one from Kerr, and one from Fatty Wyon.

Aubrey Racke yelled, and sat down in the snow. "Bai Jove! Look at Wacke!" ejaculated Arthur Augustus. "Come on, deah boys, and mop up those New House boundahs."

Gussy rushed to the rescue.

Aubrey Racke was nobody in particular; his sole claim to distinction being that he had lots and lots of money. But he was a School House man—and that was enough.

Racke needed rescuing. As he scrambled up Figgins & Co. gathered round him and playfully pelted him.

Snowballs squashed all over Aubrey. He and he rolled and sprawled in snow. His cap flew off, his jacket curled up round his neck, and all sorts of articles exuded from his pockets. He was almost buried in snow when Arthur Augustus arrived.

Unfortunately, a snowball from Figgins met Gussy, landing in his noble eye, as he reached the spot.

Arthur Augustus slipped and stumbled and came down on Racke—knocking

Gripping Long
Yuletide Yarn Starring
Tom Merry & Co.

by

MARTIN CLIFFORD

out what little wind remained in the hapless Aubrey.

"Ooogh!" moaned Racke.

"Oh cwikey!" gasped Arthur Augustus.

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Figgins & Co., and they pelted Racke and Arthur Augustus impartially as they mixed up in whirling snow.

"Urghh! Gerroff, you idiot!" gurgled Racke.

"Weally, Wacke—" gasped Arthur Augustus.

"Gurrgh!"

Blake, Herries, and Digby arrived with a rush, and then Figgins & Co. were kept busy. Arthur Augustus scrambled up, inadvertently resting a knee on Aubrey Racke's waistcoat as he did so. Racke gave an expiring squeak.

"Go for 'em!" roared Blake.

"Back up, New House!" yelled Figgins.

Monty Lowther rushed into the fray; Manners called to Tom Merry.

"Come on, Tom!"

"Blow!" answered Tom. "I've got to go to the Housemaster."

"Oh my hat! Not another row?" asked Manners.

"Blessed if I know! This term is all rows!" grunted Tom. "Anyhow, I've got to go!"

And Tom Merry headed for Mr. Railton's study, while Manners cut after Monty Lowther to join in the fray.

Five or six more New House juniors rushed up to back Figgins & Co. Lewison, Clive, and Cardew, Talbot, and Grundy joined in from the School House side. Then the battle waxed fast and furious.

Rather unfortunately for Aubrey Racke, he was in the middle of it. School House and New House men trod on him and stumbled over him; and he sprawled and howled breathlessly. Really, he seemed to need rescuing from his rescuers as much as from his assailants.

But nobody heeded Racke. He was only a slacker, anyhow, and a fellow with more money than was good for him; and if his expensive tiepin and his priceless notecase and his costly fountain-pen scattered in the snow as he rolled and sprawled, nobody minded but Racke.

And Racke, in fact, did not heed—he was only anxious to get away. Snowfights did not appeal to the slacker of the Shell.

Aubrey crawled out of it at last, and tottered away gasping to the House, leaving the merry crowd engaged in deadly combat.

Smothered with snow, which kicked up on all sides, the rival juniors of St. Jim's charged and barged and buzzed snowballs, slipped and stumbled, and scrambled up again, and generally enjoyed the strenuous life.

It was Monty Lowther of the Shell who happened to observe James Silverson, the master of the Fourth, looking out from his study window.

The window was wide open, and Mr. Silverson stood there, getting a spot of fresh air after hours in the Form-room, though he did not care to walk out in such weather.

He was looking at the snowfight, not with a pleasant expression on his hard, sharp face.

Really, it was quite an agreeable scene to a man less disgruntled by nature than James Silverson.

But James' brow was dark, and his eyes glistened; and Monty Lowther, as he spotted the face at the window, guessed why James gave them that dark look.

No doubt he supposed that Tom Merry was in

that cheery crowd—and Tom Merry was the object of James Silverson's bitterest dislike.

More and more fellows from both Houses were joining in the fray, and there were more than fifty combatants wildly mixed and mingled—so it would not have been easy for an onlooker to see whether any particular fellow was there or not.

Monty Lowther had a big, well-kneaded snowball in his hand, which he had intended for Figgins' address!

But at the sight of the disagreeable face at the window of the Fourth Form master's study, Monty changed that intention. Figgy of the New House had a narrow escape without knowing it!

If a snowball whizzed out of that whirling, swaying mob and landed in a master's study, it would be practically impossible to say from what hand it came. This chance was too good to be lost. Monty Lowther did not stop to think—he seldom did.

Whiz!

Crash!

There was a loud yell from the Fourth Form master's study.

The face at the window—smothered with squashing snow—disappeared. James went over backwards and landed on the study carpet with a bump that was heard in the quad.

"Oh, you aas!" gasped Manners. He was the only fellow who had noticed Monty's action.

"Mum's the word!" murmured Lowther.

And he rushed into the fray again. A few moments later an enraged face reappeared at the open window.

"Who threw that snowball?" shrieked James Silverson. "Tom Merry! Do you hear me? Was it you?"

Tom was not there to answer. If the other fellows heard James, they did not heed—least of all Monty Lowther. The snow-battle raged on, while James glared from the window with a glare that the fabled basilisk might have envied.

PUTTING HIS FOOT IN IT!

TOM MERRY tapped at the door of his Housemaster's study and entered.

Tom's sunny face was not so sunny as was its wont.

That term, as he had said to Manners, had been all rows, and he wondered whether he was called on the carpet for another row.

Not that he had anything on his conscience. Aubrey Racke, had he been called into his Housemaster's study, might have feared that Railton had heard about cigarettes in a Shell study. Baggy Trimble of the Fourth would have dreaded that a cake or a pudding was to be inquired after. Grundy of the Shell might have expected to be called to account for his tenth or twentieth scrap that term. But Tom's conscience was cheerfully clear—only that, he knew, did not save him from rows since James Silverson had been a master at St. Jim's.

His face clouded as he saw that his Form-master, Mr. Linton, was with Railton. He wondered angrily whether both masters were going to tackle him together for some trifle which his master had magnified into a serious matter.

The two masters were leaning over a large map that lay spread on the study table. Mr. Railton was tracing some line on the map with his forefinger.

He glanced round at Tom.

"A prefect told me you wished to see me, sir," said Tom.

"Yes, quite so, Merry. Wait a few minutes, please!" said the School House master.

He turned back to the map.

Tom Merry waited.

He realised, however, as he waited, that the matter upon which the two masters were now engaged was not connected with himself. It was, in fact, "war jaw" that was going on at the moment in his Housemaster's study.

Railton had his finger on Cologne on the map, and the two masters, as they talked, seemed to forget that Tom was waiting there.

The junior moved across to the window and stood looking out into the snowy quad, watching the snow battle in which he would have been glad to join if Railton had got through and dismissed him.

As the window was shut he saw nothing of what happened at another window farther along the row. He was quite unconscious of what had happened to James Silverson.

Indeed, in his interest in the snow fight he forgot James' unpleasant existence, looking on keenly as the New House mob at last were driven back to their own House by the victorious School House.

But he was suddenly reminded of James.

There was a loud knock at the Housemaster's door, and it flew open. James Silverson strode in, his face red, his eyes gleaming, and snow spattered over his master's gown.

"Mr. Railton!" he exclaimed, or, rather, shouted.

The two masters looked up from the map on the table in surprise.

Tom Merry glanced over his shoulder. But James did not see the junior standing at the window. Striding into the study, he stood before the two masters, his back turned to Tom.

"Mr. Silverson," exclaimed the Housemaster, "what—"

"Look at me!" panted James. "I am smothered with snow! You can see that! Mr. Railton, I have been knocked over by a snowball hurled at me as I stood at my study window a few minutes ago."

"Is it possible?" exclaimed Mr. Railton.

"If the boy concerned were in my Form, sir, I should deal with him! He is not in my Form! He is in Mr. Linton's Form! But Mr. Linton, sir, does not care to hear reports concerning that boy—he has told me so! I desire you to deal with the matter, sir."

The master of the Shell gave James a cold, hard stare.

"If you are referring to Merry—" he said.

"I am referring to Merry!"

"In that case, I can only repeat what I have said before—that I refuse to hear a single word from you on that subject, Mr. Silverson!"

"My dear Linton—" exclaimed the Housemaster.

"I mean what I say, sir!" said Mr. Linton.

"I will hear nothing from Mr. Silverson on that subject. I have reasons—good reasons—and I will not listen to incessant complaints concerning a boy for whom he entertains an unreasonable and unjustifiable dislike."

James panted.

"You hear this, Mr. Railton!" he exclaimed. "You see for yourself that I must place this matter before you, not before the boy's Form-master."

"But what has Merry done?" exclaimed Mr. Railton.

"I have told you what he has done. He has knocked me over with a snowball at my study window."

"Merry has!" ejaculated Mr. Railton blankly.

Tom Merry grinned at the back of James' head. James had not the faintest idea that he was in the study. He had not cast a glance in his direction and was utterly unaware that he was present.

One glance round would have shown him the junior he named, staring at him. But James did not glance round. His angry eyes were fixed on the School House master.

"I have received a most painful shock!" panted Mr. Silverson. "This act is in keeping with Merry's conduct all this term. Ever since I came here, sir, as a temporary master in Mr. Lathom's place I have received nothing but disrespect and insolence from that junior."

"But—" exclaimed Mr. Railton.

"The boy, sir, has set himself against me deliberately! I have told you the reason. It is because his guardian, Miss Priscilla Fawcett, is

Heartiest Christmas Greetings!

—The Editor.

distressed by his bad conduct this term, and has written to me, as a relative, on the subject, and I have, at her request, endeavoured to keep the boy within some limits of good conduct. That, sir, is the reason why I am the object of this boy's enmity."

"Quite an imaginary reason, I have no doubt!" said Mr. Linton with icy coolness. "Your own dislike of this boy, sir, has caused you—"

"I am speaking to Mr. Railton, sir, not to you!" flamed out James. "I am asking you, Mr. Railton, whether this boy Merry is to be allowed to assault a master in this school by hurling a snowball in his face?"

"Most decidedly not!" said Mr. Railton. "But I do not quite understand you, Mr. Silverson. When did this occur?"

"Not five minutes ago, sir."

"Not five minutes!" ejaculated the Housemaster. "But, my dear sir, Merry of the Shell certainly was not throwing snowballs five minutes ago."

"He was, sir! He hurled one at my face at my study window!" bawled James.

Mr. Linton's lip curled.

"I fear, Mr. Railton, that nothing can happen to Mr. Silverson without it being attributed to Merry of my Form," he said. "Mr. Silverson has no use for such a thing as evidence. This is utterly absurd!"

"You may think so, sir!" bawled James. "But, you, Mr. Railton—"

"Really, Mr. Silverson, it is somewhat absurd."

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said the Housemaster. "I am sure you will agree when—"

"Perhaps Mr. Silvester actually saw Merry hurl that snowball—five minutes ago!" said Mr. Linton with deep, dry sarcasm. "Will you go so far as to say so, Mr. Silvester?"

"Certainly I did!" roared James.

Mr. Linton gave a sarcastic laugh, and Mr. Railton fairly bounded. Both of them, looking past James, could see Tom Merry—both of them knew that he had been waiting in that study more than ten minutes. So James' statement was startling. Both of them knew that Tom had not been outside the House since third school. James, of course, did not.

James, in fact, was absolutely certain that Tom Merry had hurled that snowball. He did not doubt for a moment that Tom was in the scrapping crowd in the quad. So, though he had not actually seen who hurled the snowball, he felt it safe enough to say so—hardly realising, perhaps, that it was a false statement, so certain was he on the subject.

"Mr. Silvester!" gasped the Housemaster.

"I repeat, sir—" howled James.

"Please do not repeat such a statement, Mr. Silvester!" exclaimed the School House master. "You certainly cannot have seen Merry do anything of the kind!"

"I certainly did, sir!"

"Obviously you made a mistake!"

"I made no mistake!"

"You must have done so, Mr. Silvester! Merry has not been in the quadrangle at all since third school was dismissed."

"He may have told you so, sir, if you have already seen him, but his statement was false—untruthful—"

"Merry is here!" almost shrieked the Housemaster.

"What?"

"He is in this study!"

"Wh-a-t?"

James stared round.

He saw Tom Merry at last, and jumped as he saw him. Tom burst into a laugh—he could not help it.

"Oh!" gasped James. "He—he is here, is he? I fail to see how that alters the matter, Mr. Railton, if he has come in since—"

"He has been in this study more than ten minutes."

"What?"

"Nearly a quarter of an hour," said Mr. Linton.

"Nonsense!" gasped James.

"It is a fact, Mr. Silvester," said the Housemaster quietly. "Merry was told to come here after third school, and he came. He has been here since, waiting till I am at leisure. Whoever may have thrown a snowball at you, sir, it most certainly was not Merry!"

James' jaw dropped.

He gasped.

Often and often had James' bitter temper, and his determination to land Tom Merry in a row, caused him to over-reach himself. But never had he put his foot in it so completely and utterly as now!

Even James had to realise, and to admit, that Tom Merry had not, and could not have, buzzed that snowball. And he had said that he had seen him do it!

His face crimsoned.

"Oh!" he gasped. "Oh! I—I—I—oh! If—if

the boy has been here, under your eyes, Mr. Railton—"

"He has been here, under my eyes, Mr. Silvester!"

"Oh! In—in that case I—I must have been mistaken in—the—the confusion of the moment!" James stammered helplessly.

"Obviously you were mistaken in supposing that you saw Merry throw that snowball," said the Housemaster dryly. "And I am bound to say, Mr. Silvester, that such a mistake is not one that a master is expected to make, and that it fully justifies what Mr. Linton said a few moments ago."

James did not answer that.

He stuttered helplessly and backed out. Tom Merry grinned cheerfully. The schemer of St. Jim's backed out of the study, covered with confusion, leaving him grinning.

TREASURE-HUNTING!

"Oh gad!" exclaimed Aubrey Racke.

Racke was standing before the fire in the junior day-room. He had been scraping off snow, spluttering for breath, and making a series of unpleasant remarks concerning the snowballers.

Now, as he ran his hands through his pockets, he uttered an angry and startled exclamation.

His pal Crooke, who was lounging by the fire, glanced round at him.

"What's up?" he asked.

"My wallet's gone!" hissed Racke. "Other things, too—fountain-pen, hanky, my tie-pin. I've dropped nearly everything while those fools were bundling me over in the snow!"

He hurried to the door. Racke's wallet was rather more valuable than any other fellow's wallet; there was always a lot of money in it.

"Come and lend me a hand looking for it!" he called over his shoulder as he went.

Gerald Crooke turned a deaf ear to that request. He preferred frowning over a fire to grubbing in the snow.

Racke hurried out of the House. He had been so glad to get away from that scramble in the snow that he had not noticed his losses. Now that he had discovered them he was very anxious to get back his property.

A crowd of School House fellows were cheering in the quad. The New House had been driven off, leaving the School House in victorious possession of the field of battle.

Unheeding them, Aubrey Racke cut across to the spot where he had been rolled and rumbled, and started to search for his missing belongings.

Handkerchief and fountain-pen were soon found, but the wallet was not so easy to find. Neither was the tie-pin. Both, probably, had been trampled into the thick snow in the excited combat.

"Lookin' for somethin', deah boy?" Arthur Augustus came up. Gussy did not like the bad hat of the Shell, but he was always obliging. "Lost somethin'?"

Racke gave him a scowl. Gussy, in coming to his rescue, had started that wild scramble over him which had made Racke feel rather as if he had been under a lorry.

"My wallet," he grunted, "and my tie-pin, too."

"Bai Jove! I'll help you look for them, Wacke," said the obliging Gussy.

Other fellows gathered round to help. The

snow battle being over, they were ready to lend a hand.

A glitter from the snow caught Monty Lowther's eye.

"Here's the jolly old tie-pin!" he exclaimed. He picked it up. As he handed it to Racke with his right hand, he shaded his eyes with his left. Racke was the only fellow in the Lower School who wore a diamond pin. Monty playfully affected to be dazzled by the glitter.

"Oh, don't be a fool!" snapped Racke, as he took the pin.

"Don't you wear that pin in the black-out, Racke!" said Lowther warningly.

"Why not, you dummy?"

"You'll have an air-raid warden down on you."

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled the juniors.

"You silly idiot!" snapped Racke. "Look here, can any of you fellows see my wallet? It's got a lot in it."

"Guessed that one!" said Lowther.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Yaas, wathah!" chuckled Arthur Augustus.

"I've got to find it!" snarled Racke.

"Oh, we'll help!" said Jack Blake. "Scout round for the gold and notes, you men."

Racke's wealth was rather a joke in the School House. Still, nobody wanted him to lose it, and most of the fellows were ready to help in the treasure-hunt, as Monty Lowther called it.

Tom Merry came out of the House with a cheery smile on his face. He had been dismissed by his Housemaster at last, and he had, after all, quite enjoyed his visit to Railton's study. He chuckled at the recollection of Silverson's face as he backed out of that study.

His chums, leaving the treasure-hunt, joined him at once.

"What did Railton want?" asked Manners.

"Another row?" asked Lowther.

Tom laughed and shook his head.

"No; I expected one, but it never came off. Railton only wanted to see me about a letter he's had from my guardian."

"What the dickens has Miss Fawcett been writing to Railton for?"

"Only about the Christmas holidays."

"Something special?"

"Oh, no—nothing!" Tom coloured a little, and then laughed again. "I may as well tell you, and if you chortle I'll bang your silly heads together. Miss Priscilla thinks that, as it's wartime, I'd better not travel home alone when we break up."

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Manners.

"She thinks Hitler may come after you specially?" asked Lowther. "Or that Goebbels may gobble you?"

"Or that Goering may gore you?" asked Manners.

"Don't be funny asses!" growled Tom. "She thinks it would be nice for my dear and affectionate relation, James Silverson, to travel with me, and she seems to think that the Housemaster will fix it."

"Oh crumbs!"

"Oh crikey!"

"The dear old soul trusts dear James!" said Tom. "I can't tell her what a rotter he is—it would worry her. But I'm jolly well going to see the last of the rat when we break up here for Christmas!"

"I don't think James can be trusted to look after you!" grinned Monty. "But we shall be with you, little one. We'll see that no nasty, naughty Hitler comes hitting after you!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Manners.

"Oh, chuck it!" said Tom. "What's going on here?" he added, looking at the crowd of more than a dozen fellows searching in the trampled snow.

"Treasure-hunt," answered Monty. "The ground's carpeted with gold and notes somewhere under the snow."

"What?"

"I mean, Racke's dropped his wallet."

Tom Merry laughed.

"Let's lend a hand, then," he said.

And the Terrible Three joined in the treasure-hunt.

It was Tom Merry who discovered a wallet in a heap of trampled snow and held it up. It was wide open, having come open under trampling feet.

"Is this it, Racke?" he called out.

Aubrey ran up.

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**TAKE NOTE, CHUMS!**

*Owing to the Christmas holidays, the next number of the GEM will be on sale Tuesday, December 19th, instead of Wednesday. Look out for it.*

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"That's it; it's open!" he exclaimed. "Let's see if the things have fallen out. Oh gad!"

Racke stared into the wallet in angry dismay.

That wallet had several compartments. In one three fivers were packed; in another, six pound notes; in another, eight ten-shilling notes. Racke, who always reeked of money, seemed to be reeking more than ever at Christmastide.

He hurriedly counted the notes.

"All right?" asked Tom, with a smile.

"The notes are all right!" panted Racke. "But the quids—"

"Quids!" repeated Tom.

"Look here!"

In that wallet were five little pockets, evidently made for the reception of coins. In the old days such wallets were in common use when sovereigns were used instead of paper money.

"The sovereigns are missing!" said Racke. "I had five."

"You had five sovereigns!" ejaculated the captain of the Shell. "Oh, my hat!"

"My pater gave them to me to keep, in case—in case—well, you never know what may happen!" grunted Racke, colouring a little.

Happy as Aubrey was to possess golden sovereigns, he did not exactly like letting fellows know that he was a hoarder of gold. But he had to let it out now.

Manners gave a snort.

"Gold has been called in by the Government," he said. "You oughtn't to be keeping those quids, Racke!"

"You wouldn't, I suppose, if you had them?" sneered Aubrey.

"No," grunted Manners, "I wouldn't!"

"Perhaps—and perhaps not!" said Racke.

"Anyhow, I jolly well want to find them; they've all fallen out of the wallet."

And Racke, shoving the wallet into his pocket, began a frantic search for the missing sovereigns. And the other fellows, though their view of Racke and his golden quids was one of contemptuous amusement, kindly lent their aid, and the treasure-hunt went on actively.

A CHANCE FOR JAMES!

JAMES SILVERSON came out of the House and glanced towards the stooping, scrambling, searching crowd of fellows in the middle of the snowy quadrangle.

Mr. Silverson's face was dark, and his eyes glinting.

The little scene in the Housemaster's study had been a facer for James. Suspicion, dislike, and evil temper had led him into a disagreeable and ridiculous position, as they had often done before.

His campaign against Tom Merry was not progressing well.

The term was near its end, and, with break-up for the Christmas holidays now close at hand, his last chance would be gone. Mr. Lathom, the old master of the Fourth, would be back in his old place at the new term. James would be gone from St. Jim's.

He had little time left to carry on with his schemes. He had caused Tom Merry a great deal of trouble that term, but he did not seem to have got very far in any other way.

Getting Tom disgraced at his school and ousted from the favour of the wealthy old lady at Laurel Villa was James' game, but he seemed no nearer to winning it than he had been at the beginning of the term.

Everything seemed to go wrong in one way or another with James' scheming. And he did not realise that everything was bound to go wrong sooner or later with unscrupulous rascality opposed to honesty.

Already he had made Tom's Form-master, Mr. Linton, dislike and distrust him. What had happened that morning was likely to have the same effect on the Housemaster.

James had only one consolation left at the moment—to find out, if he could, who really had buzzed that snowball, and get him the severest punishment possible.

It was not an easy task, for if it was not Tom Merry he had not the faintest idea who it was. But he was going to try to spot the offender, at all events.

He came across towards the crowd of treasure-hunters, staring at them and wondering what they were up to.

"Bai Jove, heah's one of them, Wacke!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. He held up a coin that gleamed in the winter sunshine.

"And here's another!" called out Herries.

"Oh, good!" exclaimed Racke.

Two of his precious sovereigns had been found. Three still lay hidden somewhere in the snow.

"What is all this?" asked Mr. Silverson, in astonishment. "Are they sovereigns you are picking up?"

Monty Lowther glanced round and quietly retreated from the scene. If James was going to inquire after that snowballer Monty preferred not to be on the spot.

"They're Wacke's, sir," explained Arthur Augustus. "Wacke had some quids, sir, and he dropped his wallet and they wolloed out."

"Racke?" repeated James.

He would have been glad to hear that those golden sovereigns belonged to Tom Merry. In that case, he could have reported the matter to the Housemaster, who certainly would have taken a severe view of any junior in the House being in possession of a number of golden sovereigns

when there had been a Government order for all gold to be transferred to the authorities.

But Aubrey Racke was nothing to him; he did not want to land Racke in trouble. Indeed, James had once or twice gone out of his way to make himself agreeable to the wealthy son of the millionaire, Sir Jonas Racke.

Wealth had an irresistible attraction for James. And the fact that Racke was on the worst of terms with Tom Merry was a recommendation in the eyes of Tom's enemy.

"Here's one!" called out Tom Merry.

Tom was the next lucky man in the treasure-hunt. He held up a golden sovereign.

"That's three," said Racke.

He packed it away after the other two. Mr. Silverson's eyes followed it as it went.

Racke gave him a rather uneasy glance. It was awkward for a master to come on the scene and learn about those sovereigns.

Luckily, it was not Racke's own Form-master. But Mr. Silverson was rather given to meddling in Mr. Linton's Form.

However, Mr. Silverson took no special notice of Racke. His meddling in Mr. Linton's Form was confined to Tom Merry and Tom's special friends. He had no idea of causing trouble to Tom's enemies.

He stood looking on, apparently forgetful of his intention of inquiring after the unknown snowballer.

Two sovereigns still remained to be found, and Manners rooted one of them out of the snow and handed it over to Racke.

"That's four," said Aubrey. "Only one more. I say, try to find it before the bell goes for dinner."

"Yaas, wathah!"

But the last of the sovereigns was not easy to find. Fellows hunted and groped in the snow, and some of them, getting tired of the task, gave it up and walked away. But six or seven juniors still hunted for that elusive quid.

"You should be more careful of valuables, Racke!" said Mr. Silverson. "You are very fortunate to recover all you have lost."

"There's one I haven't found, sir," said Racke.

"I think Merry has just found it."

"Oh, good! Thanks, Merry! Chuck it here!" Tom stared round.

"I haven't found it!" he answered.

"You haven't?"

"No!"

"Look here, no larks!" said Racke. "The dinner-bell will be going soon! If you've found it, hand it over!"

"I've said I haven't!" snapped Tom. "What the dickens do you mean, Racke?"

Racke gave him a suspicious look. He was glad of help in that hunt for his lost quids, but he was the kind of fellow to suspect that another fellow might keep a sovereign if he found it.

"Well, Mr. Silverson says you picked it up!" he grunted. "If you did, hand it over—and don't play the goat!"

All the fellows bending over the snow straightened up and looked round. Tom Merry's face flushed.

"Mr. Silverson is making one more of his mistakes!" said Tom, with a curl of the lip. "I haven't picked up that sovereign, Racke!"

"I am sorry!" said James smoothly. "I certainly thought that I saw you pick up something from the snow, Merry."

Tom Merry gave him a look. "Did you?" he said, very distinctly. "Well, if you're going to fancy that I've picked up one of Racke's sovereigns that I haven't seen, Mr. Silverson, I'll clear off so long as you stand here!"

And with that Tom Merry walked away to the House.

"Tom, old man, come back!" called out Manners anxiously. He realised that that was the worst thing Tom could have done, in the circumstances.

It looked as if that last sovereign never would be found. Really, Racke had been lucky to recover four out of five scattered in thick, trampled snow.

If it was not found there were fellows—especially Racke—who would fancy that Tom had walked off with it in his pocket after what Mr. Silverson had said.

But Tom was too angry to listen to his chum's call. He walked away to the House, without a glance back.

"Oh, jiminy!" exclaimed Baggy Trimble. "Has Tom Merry got it?"

"Shut up, you frowsy ass!" growled Blake.

"Yaas, wathah! How dare you suggest such a thing, Twimble, you flabby wottah!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus indignantly.

"Well, if Mr. Silverson saw him pick it up—"

said Baggy.

"You saw him, sir?" asked Racke.

"I certainly thought so," said Mr. Silverson smoothly. "I may have been mistaken, of course—indeed, I must have been, as Merry says that he has not picked up that sovereign."

And James walked away from the spot.

He was not bothering about that snowball now. The treasure-hunt had given James a chance—and he had not neglected it.

If that last sovereign was not discovered, there were a good many fellows who would think that Tom Merry had it—Aubrey Racke, beyond the shadow of a doubt; and Aubrey was not likely to be silent about what he believed on the subject.

Racke stood with a sullen face, no longer taking part in the search. The other fellows exchanged uncomfortable glances.

"File in, for goodness' sake!" said Manners savagely. "We've got to find the rotten thing now."

"What's the good?" sneered Racke.

"You fool!" roared Manners. "Do you think Tom Merry knows anything about it, you rotter?"

"Doesn't he?" sneered Racke.

"That cur Silverson put that into your silly head on purpose!" hissed Manners. "He would like to make fellows think that very thing."

"Oh, don't talk rot!" snapped Racke. "Why should he? He saw Tom Merry pick up that quid—he thought so, at any rate."

"He never thought anything of the kind."

"Oh, rot!"

"Look for the quid, you dummy!" snapped Manners.

"No good looking here! I know where it is now!" sneered Racke.

Manners came across to him, his eyes blazing.

"You know where it is, do you?" he said, between his teeth. "And where?"

"In Tom Merry's pocket, and you know it as well as I do!" retorted Racke. He jumped back.

"Hands off! I—"

Crash!

Aubrey Racke went over backwards under Manners' fist, and crashed down on his back in the snow.

UNEXPECTED!

"WACKE, you wottah—"

"You worm!"

"You cad!"

"You tick!"

Study No. 6 all exclaimed together. Baggy Trimble giggled. The fat Baggy, at least, had no more doubt where that missing sovereign was than Aubrey Racke had.

Manners stood over the black sheep of the Shell, his fists clenched, his eyes ablaze.

"Get up, you cur," he bawled, "and I'll knock you down again!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

Racke raised himself on his elbow, panting. He did not get up—not wanting to be knocked down again. He gave Manners a black and bitter look.

"You rotter!" he panted. "You know he had it—you know he's got it! Silverson saw him snooping it—you know he did!"

"You uttah wottah, Wacke!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus indignantly. "How dare you suppose anythin' of the kind?"

"That's the sort of rotter he is!" said Blake in disgust. "That's what a fellow gets for helping him to look for his putrid money!"

"Boot him!" said Herries.

"Scrag the cad!" exclaimed Digby.

"Look here, you know, if Tom Merry's got that quid—"

burbled Trimble. "Oh, jiminy! Yaroooooh!"

A smack from Blake's hand rang on Baggy's fat head like a pistol-shot. Baggy rolled over in the snow, roaring.

"Now, Racke, you cur!" said Manners, between his teeth. "Get up and look for that filthy quid!"

You're not leaving this spot till it's found—dinner-bell or no dinner-bell! You're going to find it, if you have to crawl all over the quad on your hands and knees!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"I'll look for it in Tom Merry's pocket—if he'll let me!" snarled Racke. "No good looking for it here, now he's gone!"

"You weptile, Wacke!"

Harry Manners bent over Racke and grasped him by the collar. With a grim, savage face, he rolled the struggling Shell fellow over, and rubbed his face in the snow.

Racke struggled and panted and spluttered and kicked. Manners, with a grip of iron on the back of his neck, rubbed and rubbed.

"That's wight, Mannahs, old chap!" exclaimed Arthur Augustus. "Wag the wottah! Give the wat beans!"

"Scrag him!" said Blake.

"Urrrrrrgggh!" came a suffocating howl from Aubrey Racke. Manners did not need urging—he was scrapping the wretched Racke effectually.

"Leggo! You're choking me—urrrgggh!"

"Now will you look for that putrid quid?" roared Manners.

"Urrgggh! Yes! If you like! Urrgggh!" gurgled Racke.

"You shan't go till it's found!" snapped Manners. He released Aubrey's collar at last, and Racke struggled up, smothered from head to

foot in snow. He stood panting and spluttering for breath.

"Bai Jove!" yelled Arthur Augustus suddenly.

"What—"

"Look!"

Gussy's eye—and eyeglass—were fixed on a small glistening object in the snow, where Racke had just risen. A section of the snow hitherto undisturbed had been scraped away by the vigorous rubbing of Aubrey Racke's features in the same.

And, as Racke rose, that glistening object was revealed. It was a golden sovereign, glimmering from the snow!

"Oh!" exclaimed Manners.

"The quid!" shouted Blake.

"Oh, jiminy!" ejaculated Baggy Trimble, sitting up and blinking at the sovereign with his gooseberry eyes. "I say, Tom Merry can't have picked it up—there it is!"

Manners gripped Racke by the shoulder and spun him round to direct his attention to the quid.

"Look at that, you worm!" snapped Manners. Aubrey Racke looked at it. He stared at it. Four of his five sovereigns were safely packed away in the wallet in his pocket. There was the fifth—almost at his feet!

Obviously—even to Racke—Tom Merry had not picked it up and walked off with it. For there it was!

"Oh!" gasped Racke.

"You rotten worm!" said Jack Blake in measured tones. "There's your filthy money! Do you think that Tom Merry's got it in his pocket now, you cad?"

"I—I—I—" Racke stammered. "You heard what Silverson said! What was a fellow to think?"

"You are as wotten a wot as Silvahson, Wacke, to think anythin' of the kind!"

"Pick it up!" snapped Manners. "You pick it up, Racke! Don't any of you fellows touch it—Racke may think you want to pinch it if you do."

"I—I—I thought—" stammered Aubrey.

"Oh, shut up, and pick up that putrid quid, and get it out of sight!" snapped Manners.

Racke, in discomfited silence, picked up the sovereign and packed it away with the rest.

"That cur Silverson never fancied he saw Tom pick it up!" said Manners. "It was a lie from beginning to end! But that rat Racke would have believed it, if the quid hadn't turned up."

"Well, it has turned up!" muttered Racke. "It's all right."

"Is it?" said Manners savagely. "Not quite! Silverson ought to be booted all over the school. We can't boot Silverson—but we can boot you, and we're jolly well going to do it!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

Aubrey made a rush to escape. Manners and Study No. 6 rushed after him together. Yelling frantically, Aubrey fled through the snow, with five boots taking turns behind him as he fled.

Thud, thud, thud, thud, thud!

"Oh! Stoppit! Oh crikey! Yarooocoh!" roared Racke, as he leaped and bounded and dodged.

"Give him a few more!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Go it!"

Thud, thud, thud!

Aubrey Racke escaped into the House at last.

The dinner-bell rang a few minutes later, and the School House fellows streamed into Hall. Aubrey Racke sat very uncomfortably at the Shell table. It was likely to be some time before Aubrey recovered from that booting.

BLAKE'S CHRISTMAS PUDDING!

"QUARTER-POUND of suet," said Jack Blake.

"Yaas!"

"Two ounces of flour. Got that?"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Half a pound of raisins," said Herries.

"Wight-ho!"

"Quarter pound of mixed peel," said Digby.

"Wight as wain!"

"We shall want some milk," said Blake.

"We've got the milk all wight, old chap."

"Well, I don't expect we've got it all black!" agreed Blake.

"Weally, you ass—"

"Quarter pound of sultanas, and the same of breadcrumbs," said Blake. "Then we want currants, and a lemon. Anybody got a lemon?"

"I've got an owange, deah boy."

"The answer is a lemon!" said Blake. "And some shredded almonds. And according to this recipe, we want some rum!"

"Bai Jove! There would be wathah a wow if we were found bwingin' wum to the study!"

"If we're going to make this Christmas pudding," said Jack Blake, "we must put in the stuff according to the recipe!"

"Yaas—but—"

"Ergo—that's Latin, meaning therefore—we want some rum!" said Blake firmly.

Study No. 6 looked at one another.

They were very busy in that study. It was Blake's idea to make a Christmas pudding to grace the table at the last study supper of the term.

Gussy, Herries, and Digby agreed that it was a good idea.

Most of the ingredients were to be had at the school shop. A large basin for mixing could be borrowed below stairs—in fact, it had been borrowed, and now stood on the study table.

Boiling was a more difficult matter. Fellows cooked such things as eggs, or rashers, even kippers, in the study fireplace. But boiling a Christmas pudding was, as Blake put it, a quadruped of another hue!

But that difficulty could be overcome. Gussy, as the most fascinating man in the study, was to approach the cook on the subject and the study entertained no doubt that, if Gussy put it nicely, in his well-known bedside manner, as Blake described it, the cook would be found obliging.

So that was that; and all the enterprising study had to do was to collect the various materials, mix them up in the borrowed basin, and stir well!

After that, tied up in its cloth, the Christmas pudding would be conveyed to the regions below to be boiled by the obliging cook.

Study No. 6 were very pleased with the idea. They realised that they would be the only study that ever produced a Christmas pudding. It was rather a distinction.

It would show that Study No. 6 was the study that could do things. They were not only top study in football, but in useful things—and if any other study disputed their claim to be top study in football, as probably a good many did, anyhow, the other fellows couldn't make out that they



Monty Lowther did not stop to think. Whiz! The snowball flew, and there was a loud yell from the Fourth Form master as it squashed in his face.

weren't the top study in producing Christmas puddings—having produced the only one ever produced in a St. Jim's study at all.

"We seem to have everything except the currants and the peel," said Blake. "Trust Gussy to forget something."

"Weally, Blake—"

"Weren't you getting—the currants and the peel?" asked Herries.

"Don't let's waste time talking!" said Blake hastily. "We want all the stuff mentioned in this list—and we're short of currants, peel, and rum. We can get currants and peel at the tuckshop—but rum—"

"Um!" said Dig doubtfully.

"Might get some wum fwom Taggles!" suggested Arthur Augustus. "I have heard Twimble say he has seen a bottle of wum in Taggles' lodge. Twimble sees everythin', you know."

"Better cut out the rum!" said Herries, shaking his head. "After all, Christmas puddings can be made without rum!"

"Yaas, wathah! A fellow could use bwandy instead!" suggested Arthur Augustus.

"Got a bottle of brandy about you?" asked Blake sarcastically. "Favourite drink of yours?"

"Weally, Blake—"

"What about lemonade?" asked Herries.

"Lemonade?" repeated Blake.

"Well, rum is filthy stuff, really!" said Herries. "I'd rather drink lemonade than rum

any day! I suppose the same goes for making puddings."

"You can suppose what you like, fathead, but if you're making a pudding to a recipe, you're making a pudding to a recipe!" said Blake obstinately. "This recipe says rum, and we want some rum! We're going to have some rum!"

"Oh, my hat!" Monty Lowther looked in at the study door. "Blake! Do my aged ears hear aright?"

"What are you burbling about, you silly Shellfish?" asked Blake politely. "What are you barging in for, anyhow, pie-face?"

"Well, I looked in to ask you fellows to tea in Study No. 10!" said Monty. "We've got the biggest cake ever, arrived to-day from Laurel Villa."

"Oh good! We'll come!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"But what the thump are you up to?" asked Monty Lowther, staring at the big basin on the table and the numerous ingredients in the various stages of sorting out.

"Making a Christmas pudding!" said Blake, with dignity. "It's the sort of thing this study can do. That's what we want the rum for!"

"Oh! You relieve my mind!" said Lowther gravely. "I was afraid, from what I heard, that this study was taking to wild ways!"

"Weally, Lowthah, you ass—"

"I'll tell you what!" said Blake. "You can't be ornamental, Lowther—make yourself useful! Cut down to the tuckshop and get what we want! We want currants and peel—"

"No need to go down to the tuckshop for them!" said Monty Lowther cheerily. "I can tell you where to get them."

"Where, then?" asked Dig.

"Wait till the bell for prep—"

"What on earth good will that do?"

"You'll get the peel on the bell!" explained Monty Lowther affably.

Study No. 6 gazed at the funny man of the Shell. Deep in the mysteries of Christmas pudding they did not seem to want to hear Monty's playful punning.

"You ass!" said Dig.

"You chump!" said Herries.

"You idiot!" said Blake.

"You frightful fathead!" said Arthur Augustus.

"Then the currants," went on Monty imperturbably. "Why waste money buying currants at the tuckshop when you can get them for nothing?"

"Where can we get currants for nothing, fathead?" demanded Blake.

"Walk down to the Rhy!"

"What?"

"Lots of currents in the river!" said Monty.

Jack Blake picked up the big wooden ladle with which the Christmas pudding was to be mixed. He took aim.

"Where will you have it?" he asked.

"Well, I'm only trying to help!" said Lowther.

"Every little helps, as Mr. Little said when he was asked how he provided for his large family. If you really want rum—"

"It's in the recipe—we've got to have everything in the list. If you know where to get any rum—"

"Easy thing! Go and ask Mrs. Taggles at the tuckshop."

"You howling ass, she wouldn't give us any rum, even if she had any."

"Do let a fellow speak! Ask her to let you have one of her bottles of ginger-beer for nothing."

"What would be the good of that?" shrieked Blake.

"I mean, if she lets you have the ginger-beer for nothing, it will be rum!" explained Monty Lowther.

"What?"

"Very rum!" said Lowther.

Study No. 6 gazed at Monty Lowther—then, all together, they jumped at him. The humorist of the Shell dodged too late. Four pairs of hands collared him in the doorway and bumped him on the floor.

"Wow!" roared Lowther as he bumped.

"Bang his head on the floor!" said Blake ferociously. "We can get rum that way! If we knock a little sense into it, it will be rum!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bang!

"Varooooop!"

Monty Lowther wriggled out of Study No. 6 and fled for his life. After which, Blake & Co. were left to deal with the difficulties of the Christmas pudding and its ingredients without any further assistance from the funny man of the Shell.

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TOO MUCH FOR TRIMBLE!

BAGGY TRIMBLE pushed open the door of Study No. 6 and blinked in cautiously with his round, gooseberry eyes.

Baggy grinned.

The study was vacant.

On the table stood a large basin. That large basin was nearly full. Baggy stepped to it, peered into it, and grinned expansively.

Three ingredients were still lacking. But Blake & Co. had got on as far as they could.

All the ingredients they had had been mixed in the big basin, and the four juniors had taken their turns at stirring. That Christmas pudding was taking shape. It needed, of course, a lot of stirring. It was agreed that every time a fellow had a few minutes to spare he should give that pudding a stir.

Now, however, the chums of Study No. 6 were giving themselves a respite. D'Arcy and Digby had gone down to the tuckshop to get those currants and that peel, to be added to the pudding. Herries had gone to Taggles' lodge to see whether some small quantity of rum could be extracted from the bottle which, according to Trimble, the ancient porter of St. Jim's kept in his lodge. Herries rather considered that lemonade would do better; still, he was going to get some rum if he could, as Blake seemed so set on sticking to that recipe.

Blake, after the three had gone, remained, stirring the pudding for some time, but he wandered out of the study at last, remembering that he had to say something about Soccer, to Levison of the Fourth.

It was then that Trimble happened.

Baggy had had an eye on that study! And Baggy grinned happily at the squashy contents of the basin on the table.

Trimble of the Fourth liked Christmas pudding! Certainly he preferred it in its finished state, after cooking. But all was grist that came to the fat Baggy's mill.

"He, he!" gurgled Baggy.

And he dipped a fat paw into the basin and groped for raisins. Fishing for raisins, in a squashy mass in a basin, would not have appealed to everybody. But so long as he snaffled raisins, Baggy did not mind much where he snaffled them.

He dipped and dipped as if he were dipping into a lucky bag!

His fat jaws worked as if Baggy had discovered the secret of perpetual motion. He chewed and chewed. He groped and groped. It began to look as if Jack Blake would require another supply of raisins, as well as currants and peel and rum, for that Christmas pudding.

Deep in that enticing occupation, Baggy quite forgot the danger of some of the owners of the study coming back.

So he did not turn his fat head as Jack Blake looked in at the door.

Blake looked in to see whether D'Arcy and Digby had turned up with the currants and peel, or Herries with the rum. They hadn't. He did not see any of his chums—he saw Baggy Trimble.

The expression that came over Jack Blake's face at the sight of Baggy groping with a fat and grubby paw in that Christmas pudding in the basin was quite alarming.

It might have scared Baggy had he seen it! But Baggy was too busy to look round. Baggy groped, and chewed, and was happy.

Blake breathed hard. He breathed deep.

They were not fearfully particular in the St. Jim's Fourth, but nobody was likely to want that Christmas pudding after Baggy's grubby paw had been groping in it. That pudding was as good as a goner. Study No. 6 had to begin all over again.

"Guzzle, guzzle, gurgle!" came from the happy Baggy, groping and chewing, as Blake stepped behind him.

Then there was a sudden, alarmed yell from Baggy as a grip of iron was laid on the back of his fat neck.

"Yurrooop!"

"You burgling bloater!" roared Blake.

"Oh jiminy! I say—groooogh!" gurgled Baggy, struggling frantically in Blake's powerful grip.

"You want that Christmas pudding, do you?" hissed Blake "Well, you're going to have it!"

"Oooogh!" gurgled Baggy wildly, as Blake pushed his fat face over the big basin. "I say—groogh! Don't you—ooooogh! Gurrgrgh!"

Splash!

Baggy's fat face disappeared into the pudding. A horrible gurgle exuded from that Christmas pudding. But Blake pushed on. Baggy's head disappeared into the pudding after his face.

Taking the hapless Baggy by his back hair, Blake rammed that fat head well down!

"Urrrrrrrgh!" came from the pudding.

"Have all you want!" hissed Blake

"Wurrrrrrgh!"

"Don't spare the pudding!"

"Gurrgrgh!"

Blake released Baggy's neck at last. He did not want to suffocate Baggy—much as he deserved it.

A fat head jerked out of the basin—streaming with pudding. A mask of squashy pudding covered Baggy's fat face. His hair was thick with pudding—his neck and his ears were full of pudding, as well as his mouth! Never, in all his podgy career, had Baggy Trimble ever had such a generous helping of Christmas pudding!

"Woosooooooooogh!" gurgled Baggy, clawing at sticky pudding. "Ooooch!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Blake.

He had lost that Christmas pudding. He had to get the ingredients all over again and start afresh. It was fearfully exasperating. But Trimble's aspect, clothed in pudding as in a garment, was too much for him. He yelled.

"Urrrgh!" spluttered Baggy. "I'm chook-chook-choking! Groogh! Look at me!"

"Ha, ha, ha! Have some more?"

"Yurrrrrgh!"

"Bai Jove!" Arthur Augustus D'Arcy and Digby came in at the door. "Gussy's eyeglass dropped from his eye in his astonishment.

"Wha-a-t's that?"

"Trimble wanted the pudding—so I let him have it!" explained Blake.

"Woosooooooooogh!"

"Oh cwikey!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You can snigger!" yelled Trimble. "Look at me! I'm smothered! Ooogh! It's going down my neck—gurrgrgh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

George Herries arrived. D'Arcy and Digby had the currants and the peel, but Herries arrived empty-handed.

"I say, I can't get any rum from Taggles!" he said. "He says he's a teetotaller, and he said he would report me to the Housemaster if I said

there was any rum in his lodge— Why, great pip, what's that?"

Herries stared at the sticky Baggy.

"Baggy was scoffing it, so I let him have the lot!" grieved Blake. "He doesn't seem to like it, now he's got it!"

"Our pudding!" gasped Herries. "Why, the fat, pinching swab—"

"Grooogh! Oooogh!"

"He's left some in the basin—he can have that, too!" said Herries. He grabbed the basin from the table, up-ended it, and jammed it down over Trimble's head. It came down to his podgy chin.

"Yurrooop!" came a yell from the unfortunate Baggy, as he was bonneted by the basin and the remainder of the pudding exuded over him.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Grooogh! Ooooh! Oh jiminy! Woooch!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Study No. 6. The sight of Baggy Trimble, bonneted by the pudding basin, made them shriek.

"Oh jiminy! Oooogh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Time we got along to Study No. 10 to tea," remarked Blake. "You can have all the pudding, Trimble! Have a good time!"

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And Study No. 6 trooped away, howling with laughter, while Baggy jerked off the pudding basin and scraped off pudding. He tottered from the study, gasping and spluttering. For the first time in history Baggy Trimble had had too much pudding, and wished that he hadn't had so much!

THE PUDDING MAKERS!

"WHACKS round!" said Jack Blake.

Blake made that remark to the Terrible Three of the Shell in morning break. Tom Merry, Manners, and Lowther gave him inquiring looks.

"Bob each!" said Blake. "I want a bob from each of you!"

Monty Lowther bowed solemnly.

"That do?" he asked.

"Eh?" Blake stared at him. "What do you mean, fathead?"

"Didn't you say you wanted a bob from each of us?" asked Monty. "Well, I've bobbed—now you fellows bob, if that's what he wants."

"You funny ass!" said Blake. "Can't you keep that for the 'Weekly'? Look here, you Shellfish, our Christmas pudding is a goner—I told you Trimble had it! We're going to make another—but money's rather tight. If you fellows would like a whack in the Christmas pudding, shell out all round, see?"

"I see!" assented Tom Merry. "Right-ho!"

"Hold on, though!" said Lowther. "I don't mind springing a bob, but—"

"But what?" snorted Blake, probably scenting another of Monty's jests coming.

"Did you say whacks in the Christmas pudding?"

"Yes; whacks all round, and then we can get a new lot of stuff for it. It runs into-money, you know."

"But, look here, that can't be in the recipe!" argued Lowther. "I've never heard of wax in a Christmas pudding—"

"What?"

"They put all sorts of things in a Christmas pudding, I know," said Monty. "But wax—"

"You funny idiot!" roared Blake. "Shell out a bob, and shut up!"

The Terrible Three, laughing, shelled out the required shilling each.

"If you've got any threepenny-bits you can shell them out, too!" said Blake. "It's rather fun to put threepenny-bits in a Christmas pudding. Fellows like to find them. Got any?"

But the chums of the Shell had no threepenny-bits.

"Ask Raeke for some of his quids!" suggested Lowther. "Fellows might like to find threepenny-bits, but almost any fellow would rather find quids!"

"Fathead!"

"Rather a good idea!" said Tom, laughing. "Raeke wouldn't miss a quid so much as any other fellow would miss threepence. He's scented with money."

"See him parting with any of it!" said Blake, with a sniff. "Look here, do you fellows mind if we bring our Christmas pudding to your study when we start it again? It would be safer in a Shell study, with that fat grampus Trimble nosing about the Fourth!"

"Good egg!" said Tom. "We'll lend a hand at the stirring, too!"

"Then I'll cart the basin along to Study No. 10, and bring the stuff there after class," said Blake.

And Blake went off contentedly, to cart the big basin from Study No. 6 in the Fourth to Study No. 10 in the Shell, all ready for that Christmas pudding to be mixed over again, safe from the greedy paws of the fat Baggy.

After class that day seven juniors gathered in Study No. 10 in the Shell. On the table in Tom Merry's study stood the big basin. Round it were gathered numerous packages, containing the ingredients for the second edition of Jack Blake's Christmas pudding.

"Weigh them out carefully," said Blake. He had borrowed a pair of scales from the regions below for the purpose.

"That's the weigh to do it," agreed Monty Lowther. "There's a right weigh and a wrong weigh."

"Shut up!" roared Blake. "Now, a quarter of a pound of suet."

"That's wight!" said Arthur Augustus.

"Looks to me yellowish," said Lowther.

"Eh—what about that, Lowthah?"

"Didn't you say that that was white?"

"Weally, you ass—"

"Two ounces of flour," said Blake, with a glare at Lowther, "and half a pound of raisins."

"Now, if I were an Irishman—" sighed Lowther.

"If you were a what, you blithering ass?"

"An Irishman. I could say there were good reasons for making a Christmas pudding!"

"Kill him, somebody! Quarter pound of mixed peel, quarter of a pound of sultanas, same of breadcrumbs— Got any crummy bread here?"

"Better call in Trimble."

"Trimble?"

"He's rather crummy!"

"You blithering, blithering, blithering owl!"

"Now you're getting as crusty as Trimble is crummy!"

"Bai Jove! I weally don't know how Lowthah can keep on makin' one wotten pun aftah

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anothah!" said Arthur Augustus. "Pewwaps there is somethin' wonky in your bwain, old chap! Do you think so?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Now we want a lemon. We haven't got any rum, after all."

"Well, look here," said Herries, "my idea is that a spot of lemonade would be better than muck like rum!"

"Ass!"

"Well, that's what I think," declared Herries. "How can rum be any good in a pudding when it's bad in every other way? Now, a spot of lemonade—"

"Chump!"

"Well, I agree with Herries," said Monty Lowther. "You asked for a lemon yourself, Blake. If you make the lemon aid in mixing the pudding—"

"The—the what? The lemon aid, you howling idiot!"

"Bai Jove! Is that anothe wotten pun, Lowthah?"

"Now we want a nutmeg," said Blake. "We only want a bit of it, but it's got to be grated. Anybody got a nutmeg-grater?"

"We've only got the positive, not the comparative," said Lowther.

"What do you mean, ass?"

"I mean, we've got a grate, but not a grater."

"Idiot! Where's a grater?" hooted Blake.

"All serene! I'll tell you where," said Monty Lowther soothingly. "What about Gussy?"

"Gussy?"

"Yes. You see, you're a great ass, but Gussy's a greater!"

"Bai Jove!"

Crack!

"Yaroooh!" roared Monty Lowther, as Blake suddenly brought the wooden ladle into action, establishing contact between it and the crown of Monty's head. "Wow! You silly owl! Yarooop!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You silly ass! I'll jolly well—"

Tom Merry and Manners pulled Monty back in time. There was an interval in punning while Monty rubbed his head, and Blake went on adding the ingredients to the pudding.

All was in at last, and the mixing began. Six juniors took turns at stirring the pudding, Monty Lowther being apparently too busy rubbing the spot where the ladle had landed.

But the pudding was well stirred by the time the pudding makers knocked off work. That evening there was going to be more stirring, and the next day still more; so that pudding, whatever little faults or failings it might have otherwise, was, at least, to be well stirred.

In fact, Monty Lowther, having recovered from the crack of the ladle, remarked that there were going to be stirring times in Study No. 10!

A ROGUE IN THE DARK!

JAMES SILVERSON stopped, without a sound, outside the door of the Shell dormitory in the School House.

The stroke of one had boomed through the winter's night.

The interior of the House was deeply dark. Not even a glimmer of the snow came in at the blacked-out windows.

James had ascended the staircase without a sound. Now he stood noiseless, listening.

All was silent, all was still. In the great

building no one else was awake; and the School House lay buried in silence and slumber.

It was safe—safe for the schemer and plotter—yet James felt a trembling in his knees, and his throat was dry.

So far, in his campaign against his schoolboy rival for a fortune, James had been careful to run little risk. Unscrupulous and ruthless as he was, he did not like risks.

But he was running risks now if, by unlucky chance, a wakeful eye fell on him; for what he was going to do now was a rather desperate act.

James was, in fact, getting desperate. With break-up for Christmas he had to go. He was not going with his work undone if he could help it.

But if he was caught in this it meant that he would go at once; it might mean that he would go to prison. And he stood for several long minutes outside the Shell dormitory before he finally made up his mind, doubt and hesitation setting in at the eleventh hour.

He made up his mind at last, and his thin lips set hard. Softly he turned the door-handle and pushed the door open.

In the dormitory it was as black as a hat. But James, though he had no business in the Shell quarters, had made himself familiar with the ground. He had taken plenty of care of that. He knew where the beds were, and he hardly needed a light.

But, after standing within the room and listening for another long minute, hearing only the regular breathing of sleepers, he ventured to turn on a spot of light from a tiny flashlamp.

He shut it off as he stood beside Aubrey Racke's bed.

Racke, like the rest of the Shell, was fast asleep. If he dreamed, certainly he never dreamed that an intruder was hovering by his bedside in the dark.

James made hardly a sound as he groped in the clothes folded on a chair beside the bed.

In a minute or less a wallet was in his hand. From that wallet, when he had opened it, five sovereigns, packed in the little pockets inside, were extracted one by one.

The notes, of which there were a good many, were left. A thief in the night might hesitate to take notes which were numbered and could be traced. With golden sovereigns it was a different matter.

A sovereign could not be traced, and although worth nominally only twenty shillings, it could be sold, since the rise of the price of gold, for nearly twice as much. Those five sovereigns would produce seven or eight pounds if sold as gold, and they could not be traced.

Not that James had any idea of pinching Aubrey's board. Even James Silverson had not come down to that. The discovery that a Shell fellow had golden coins in his possession had caused a deadly scheme to germinate in James' cunning brain—a scheme which, he hoped, was going to be a success at last, little time as he had left.

Those sovereigns were slipped into James' waistcoat pocket. The wallet he dropped on the floor, so that Racke, when he turned out in the morning, could not fail to perceive at once that his money had been meddled with.

James stepped back from the bedside. So far, all had gone well. No junior was likely to wake at that hour, and none had awakened.

But James was not finished yet. He stood in thought.

That miserable theft was to be landed on Tom Merry. But it was useless to slip the sovereigns into his pockets. He was quite likely to find them there, and if he did he would show them up at once, and want to know who had put them there. It was quite likely that he would be up in the morning before Racke, too. He did not always wait for rising-bell, and Racke, like the slacker he was, always stayed in bed till the latest possible moment. It would have been a poor outcome of James' scheme had Tom Merry, getting up before Racke, found sovereigns in his pocket, and displayed them to the whole dormitory.

That was not good enough. James thought of it, but he shook his head. After all, if a young rascal turned out in the night to pinch, he was more likely to slip down from the dormitory and hide the loot in his study. There it would be safe till he could dispose of it next day.

James turned on a spot of light again, and turned it off when it had shown him Tom Merry's bed.

He grasped a corner of the bedclothes, and, with a sudden jerk, pulled most of them off.

The next instant he was backing silently to the door.

There was a startled exclamation in the darkness as Tom Merry suddenly awakened and sat up in bed.

"Oh, what the thump——"
James backed silently out of the dormitory and shut the door without a sound. Outside he listened to the sounds from within.

"What silly ass——" exclaimed Tom Merry. He peered round in the dark. His bedclothes were gone, and he could only suppose that some idiotic practical joker had jerked them off by way of a jape.

He turned out of bed to recover them. "That you, Monty, you fathead?" he growled.

"Eh? What?" came a sleepy voice.

"Who's that up?" came another. "Oh crumbs!" Tom, groping in the dark, caught his foot in the tangled bedclothes on the floor and stumbled.

"What's the row?" came Grundy's voice.

"I say, what's up?" came a startled howl from Crooke. "Is it an air-raid? Was it the signal? Was it——"

"No!" hooted Tom. "It's all right!"

"What the dooce are you waking us all up for, then?" exclaimed Aubrey Racke. Racke and a dozen other fellows had awakened.

"Is that you, Tom?" called out Manners.

"Yes!" growled Tom. "It's all right—nothing's the matter!"

"What the dickens are you up for, then?"

"Some silly ass lugged my bedclothes off!" snorted Tom. "Was it you, Monty, you funny idiot?"

"Not guilty, my lord!" yawned Monty Lowther.

"Well, some silly ass did!"

"No need to wake up the whole dorm, if somebody did!" grunted Grundy.

"Oh rats!"

"Well, who did it?" came Racke's sneering voice.

"If anybody did, who did?"

"I've said somebody did, Racke," answered Tom Merry savagely.

"You haven't just come in from the Green Man?" asked Racke.

"Oh, my hat!" exclaimed Grundy. "Look here, Tom Merry, if you've been out on the tiles

you needn't wake everybody up when you come in."

Tom Merry groped for his pillow and groped towards Racke's bed. There was a sudden yell from Aubrey as the pillow swiped.

"Ow! Ooogh! What's that—who-what—"

"That's my pillow, you cad!" said Tom. "Do you still think I've just come in from the Green Man? If you do I'll give you another!"

"Get away, you fool!" snarled Racke.

"But who the dickens has been larking at this time of night?" exclaimed Talbot.

"I wish I knew!" growled Tom. "I'd give him too before I turn in again."

James Silverson, outside the dormitory door, listened. He heard Tom Merry go back to bed at last, and silence settled once more on the dormitory.

James smiled in the dark.

All the Shell knew now that Tom Merry had been up in the night in the dark. They could draw their own conclusions when the sovereigns were missed from Racke's wallet in the morning.

Silently the scheming rascal stole away down the stairs to the study landing. A few minutes later he was in Study No. 10.

There, with the door shut, and the black-out curtain over the window, he could venture to turn on a light.

Flashlamp in hand, James stood looking round Tom Merry's study.

It was easy enough to hide such small objects as sovereigns in a study, but James had to be careful. A missing watch had been hidden in that study once, under the lumber of old papers and letters in Tom Merry's desk; but it had turned up at the wrong time, all the same. James was not going to try that desk again.

He had to find a hide-out which would escape the eyes of the owners of the study, and yet be spotted in a search. That was not so easy.

He started and stared at the sight of the big basin standing on the table—fairly blinking at the unexpected sight of the mixture of a Christmas pudding, with a wooden ladle sticking in it, left by the last stirrer.

A Christmas pudding was about the last thing Mr. Silverson would have expected to find in a junior study.

But as he looked at it a malicious grin stole over James' hard face. This was what he wanted!

Tom Merry and his friends, it seemed, were making a Christmas pudding. What safer hiding-place for stolen sovereigns than stirred into that mixture?

Once stirred in they were not likely to be seen again. The thick paste of the pudding would stick to them, cover them, and they would not be noticed. James' eyes gleamed.

Tom Merry, Manners, or Lowther would never dream of what was there. But if the study was searched for stolen sovereigns that pudding-basin would be searched like everything else.

Grimming, James dropped the sovereigns one by one into the pudding, and stirred them in with the ladle.

He stirred industriously till that new and peculiar ingredient of a Christmas pudding was well hidden from sight.

Then, leaving the ladle as he had found it, the schemer of St. Jim's shut off his light and left the study. As he crept away in the dark, James Silverson was happily satisfied that he had at last pinned his schoolboy rival down—that Tom

Merry would not remain long enough at St. Jim's for the coming break-up for the Christmas holidays.

MISSING MONEY!

CLANG! Clang!

The rising-bell rang in the dim December morning.

Tom Merry was first out of bed in the Shell dormitory in the School House. The other fellows turned out—Racke and Crooke, as usual, the last.

"Urrgh! Beastly cold!" grunted Aubrey. Then, as his eyes fell on his clothes, he started, and a very ugly look came over his unprepossessing face.

He had left his clothes folded on a chair—not very neatly; Racke was never tidy. But now they were so disarranged that it was clear at a glance that they had been disturbed in the night. The trousers hung over the chair—the jacket was half on the floor—the waistcoat crumpled—the socks both fallen. Racke stared at them—and then at his wallet, which lay beside the chair. His eyes glinted.

"Look here, who did this?" he called out. "Is this what you turned out for last night, Tom Merry?"

Tom, already half through his dressing, looked round.

"What's that?" he asked.

"Look at my clobber!" exclaimed Racke angrily. "Somebody's been rooting through my clothes last night! Look where my wallet is."

"Nothing to do with me, is it, you dummy?"

Racke gave him a black look and picked up the wallet. All eyes in the Shell dormitory turned on him as he looked into it. Everybody could read the suspicion on his face.

"Oh!" gasped Racke. "Oh, you rotter! Give me my sovereigns!"

"Are you speaking to me?" exclaimed Tom blankly.

"You know I am, you rotter!" roared Racke. "The quids have been pinched out of my wallet—look at it! Who was up in the night?"

Tom, who was seated on his bedside, lacing his shoes, leaped to his feet. His face flamed at Aubrey Racke.

"You cur!" he panted. "Do you dare to say—"

He made a stride towards Racke. But Racke, for once, did not flinch. His face was as angry as Tom's.

"I want my money!" he said between his teeth. "If I go down without it, I'll go straight to the Housemaster! I'm not going to be robbed!"

"You utter fool!" exclaimed Talbot. "Do you think—"

"I don't think—I know!" roared Racke. "Those sovereigns are gone! Somebody went through my pockets last night. Well, who?"

A crowd of half-dressed fellows gathered round Aubrey Racke. He held up the wallet. The sovereigns were gone—each of the little pockets in the wallet was empty.

"By gad!" said Crooke. "Somebody's had them!"

"Who was up in the night?" howled Racke.

Tom Merry clenched his hands.

"You rat!" he said savagely. "I told you at the time why I was up in the night! Somebody yanked off my bedclothes—"

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"And I never believed you at the time, either!" snarled Racke. "I thought then that you were coming in after breaking bounds—and made a row, and told a lie about it—but I know now what you were up to!"

Manners pushed Tom Merry back.

"Hold on, Tom!" he said. "The quids are gone! That rotten hoarder has lost his rotten hoard. Let's find out who it was pulled off your bedclothes last night. That will settle that."

"You didn't see him, Tom?" asked Lowther.

"Of course I didn't!" snapped Tom. "Can I see in the dark, like a cat? I woke up when they were dragged off, that's all."

"So you say!" hissed Racke. "Well, if it happened, let the fellow who did it say so! No need for him to keep it a secret."

Tom Merry, with a crimson face, looked round over the crowd of staring faces.

"Speak up, whoever it was!" he said. "I'm not going to make a row about it—it was only meant for a fatheaded joke, I suppose. Who was it?"

There was no answer from the Shell fellows. Some of them exchanged curious looks. But no one spoke.

Tom breathed hard.

"Whoever it was is bound to speak up!" he said. "You can see what that cur thinks—that I was out of bed rooting after his filthy money! Whoever it was, tell that cad what really happened."

Silence.

The crimson faded out of Tom's face as he looked round. There was a long silence.

"Nobody here!" said Kangaroo awkwardly. "Must have been a fellow from another dormitory!"

"Likely, isn't it?" jeered Racke. "I don't know what time it was, but it must have been after midnight. I know that! Likely that a fellow came larking from another dormitory after midnight? And why did he pick Tom Merry's bed specially?"

The Shell fellows looked at Tom. There was doubt in many faces now.

It was, in fact, possible, but extremely unlikely, that a fellow from another Form had come larking in the small hours.

What Racke believed was plain—it was, in fact, exactly what James intended him to believe. Tom Merry had turned out in the night—he had been heard—and he had given the first pretext that came into his head to account for being out of bed!

"You rotten worm!" said Manners, breaking a painful silence. "Only the other day you fancied that Tom had picked up one of your rotten quids in the snow, and it was found ten minutes afterwards—"

"Find them now!" snarled Racke. "If you find them, all right. I'm not going to be robbed of five quids!"

"Have a little sense! If Tom wanted your putrid money, he could have snooped it any night this term—every man in the Form knows that your pockets smell of money—"

"He never knew till a day or two ago that I had sovereigns," sneered Racke. "He wouldn't be fool enough to touch notes, I dare say. Nobody's ever touched my money before—but nobody knew, till this week, that I had sovereigns in my wallet. Now they're gone—a day or two

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"Oooogh!" gurgled Baggie wildly as Blake Splash! Baggie's face

after Tom Merry found out that I had them! What was he doing up in the night?"

"I've told you!" said Tom, between white lips.

"And nobody here will say that he larked in the night with your bedclothes—everybody knows it's a lie!" roared Racke. "Your own friends know it, as well as everybody else."

Tom caught his breath.

"If some silly ass has been larking with Racke's filthy money, the sooner he says so, the better!" he muttered.

A dozen fellows looked at Monty Lowther. But the funny man of the Shell was looking as serious as the rest.

Racke jammed the wallet into his pocket with a savage gesture.

"I'll leave it till I go down!" he said venomously. "If I go down without my sovereigns, I go straight to the Housemaster! I jolly well know that I shall have to part with the quids, if I let him know—but I shall get my money's worth for them—I won't be robbed."

"You—you dare to accuse me!" Tom choked.

"I'll leave it to Railton!" sneered Racke. "You'll hand over those quids, or you'll be searched for them! I'm not going to be robbed."

"You cad!" exclaimed Tom, advancing on Racke.

"Hold on, Tom!" exclaimed Manners.

"Hands off!" yelled Racke, backing away.



t face over the basin. "I say—groogh!"
into the pudding.

Manners and Lowther grabbed Tom by the arms and dragged him back.

"Let me go!" roared Tom furiously. "I'm going to smash him!"

"Hold on!"

"I tell you, I'll—"

"Cheese it, old bean!" said Monty Lowther. "Don't make Racke's face uglier than it is—he's the limit already!"

"I'll—"

"Cheese it! Let him go and tell Railton—then he will have to hand over his jolly old hoard! And the fellow who hid it will tell Railton where to put his finger on it, perhaps!"

Tom Merry gasped.

"Monty! You utter ass! Are you fool enough to play practical jokes with money?"

"Monty, you fathead—" exclaimed Manners, in mingled exasperation and relief.

Monty Lowther laughed.

"Isn't it time Racke had a lesson about hoarding quids and flourishing his money about all over the shop?" he asked.

"Yes—but—"

"You—you—you fool!" panted Racke. He stared at Monty Lowther. "Is this one of your potty japes, after all?"

"That's telling!" said Lowther blandly.

"Where are those sovereigns?" yelled Racke.

"O where and O where can they be?" chanted Lowther.

"Will you tell me what you've done with them?"

"I'm not admitting that I've done anything with them!" said Monty Lowther cheerfully. "All I say is, that I shouldn't be surprised if they turn up after you've been to Railton about it! Go ahead!"

There was a laugh in the Shell dormitory.

The matter, which had looked fearfully serious was turning out to be only one more of Monty's endless japes—to scare Racke into fancying that he had lost his precious money!

Racke, scowling savagely, but relieved on the subject of his quids, dressed, and went down—but he did not head for the Housemaster's study.

The rest of the Shell went down—Monty Lowther smiling, his friends looking very grave.

In the quadrangle Tom Merry and Manners tackled Monty at once.

"You ass!" said Manners.

"You chump!" said Tom.

Monty Lowther gave them a whimsical look.

"What's biting you two?" he asked.

"You ought to have more sense—even you!" said Tom sharply. "Larking with money is a mad trick! It might start a suspicion of stealing—it has, in fact! That rat Racke was absolutely sure that I'd pinched his putrid quids till you owned up you'd been japing!"

"But I didn't."

"You as good as did, fathead! For the love of Mike, let the cad have his quids back at once!"

"I wish I could!" said Lowther quietly.

"Well, you can if you've been japing with them!" snapped Manners.

"But I haven't," said Monty in the same quiet tone. "I know no more of Racke's quids than you fellows do. I've let Racke think so to keep him from going to Railton—and to gain time."

"Wha-at?"

"That's all," said Lowther. "Those quids are gone, Tom. It's going to be put on you; and we can guess, from what's happened before, who's at the bottom of it!"

Manners gave a gasp.

"Silverson!"

"Silverson!" said Lowther. "Who else? And the rat will be expecting Racke to do a song and a dance about it as soon as the Shell are down."

"Oh!" gasped Tom.

"I'm keeping Racke quiet," said Lowther.

"He won't go to Railton so long as he thinks that his filthy quids have been hidden for a jape. He doesn't want Railton to know about those quids if he can help it."

"But—" stammered Tom.

"We're gaining time," said Lowther. "We've got to gain time, and find those quids. We've got to find them before Racke howls out that they're pinched."

"Where?"

"Wherever they've been put to look as if you pinched them," said Monty Lowther.

"Oh!" gasped Tom again.

James Silverson, walking in the quad, glanced at the three Shell fellows and smiled. James was expecting to hear of a row in the Shell that morning.

But James was disappointed. There was no row in the Shell that morning, and James could only wonder whether Racke, after all, had not yet missed his quids, and how long it would be before he did miss them.

NO LUCK!

"I SAY, Gussy——"

"What did you call me, Twimble?" asked Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, with stately dignity.

"Eh—Gussy——"

"I am Gussy to my friends, Twimble!"

And Arthur Augustus, with his noble nose in the air, walked on.

Why Baggy Trimble rounded him up in the quad in break that morning Arthur Augustus did not know. Neither did he want to know. All he wanted was that the fat and frowsy Baggy should refrain from coming between the wind and his nobility, so to speak.

The snow was thick in the quad, and plenty of fellows were snowballing. Figgins & Co. were hotly engaged with a School House crowd. But Baggy Trimble was not thinking of snowballing. He dodged two or three, otherwise passing them unheeded, as he trundled after Arthur Augustus and caught him by the sleeve.

"I say, old chap——" burred Baggy.

"Pway do not address me as 'old chap,' Twimble!" said Arthur Augustus. "And pway take your gwubbay paw off my sleeve!"

"Nice way to talk to a fellow who wants to oblige you!" said Baggy. "I was going to offer to stir that Christmas pudding for you."

Arthur Augustus grinned. He could guess that if Baggy Trimble got in the vicinity of Jack Blake's Christmas pudding, it would not be stirring that Baggy would do.

"Wats!" he answered. "Wun away and play, Twimble!"

"I jolly well know you fellows are making a Christmas pudding," said Baggy. "It's a lot of trouble stirring it. It wants a lot of stirring. I say, where is it? It ain't in your study."

"If you have been nosin' into my studay, Twimble——"

"Well, people are generally glad to get somebody to lend a hand at stirring a Christmas pudding," said Baggy. "You tell me where it is, and I'll stir it for you till the bell goes for third school. I mean it."

"I wefuse to tell you where it is, Twimble! You are not to be twusted with a Chwistmas pudding—even an uncooked one! You are a gweedy, gwubbay little beast, Twimble! Now wun away!"

"Have you parked it in some other study?" asked Trimble.

"I wefuse to tell you what studay it is in, Twimble, or whethah it is in a studay at all!" answered Arthur Augustus. "And if you go nosin' wound Tom Mewwy's studay you will get jollay well kicked! Now wun away, and welieve me of your disagweeble company!"

Baggy Trimble trundled away and relieved Arthur Augustus of his disagreeable company. He grinned as he trundled.

Baggy was not a bright youth, but he was bright enough to deduce from Arthur Augustus' reply that that pudding was parked in Study No. 10 in the Shell.

The fat Baggy trundled into the House. He mounted the stairs, with a cheery grin of anticipation on his podgy visage.

Nobody was to be seen in the Shell passage; the coast was clear. Baggy expected to see nobody; fellows hardly ever came up to the studies in break. He had no doubt that Tom Merry, Manners, and Lowther were out of the

House, like everybody else. It was, as a rule, very unlikely that they would be found in their study in the brief interval between second and third school; they were too keen on the open air for that.

Baggy arrived at Study No. 10 in the Shell, opened the door quickly, and trundled in. He shut the door after him.

Not till he had shut the door did he make the unexpected discovery that there were, after all, three fellows in the study!

"Oh!" gasped Baggy.

Tom Merry was sorting over his desk. Manners was going through the table drawer. Lowther was examining jars on the mantelpiece.

The Terrible Three seemed to be searching for something—what, Baggy had no idea; but it was a very unlucky circumstance for him that they were doing it in break that morning.

Three stares turned on him at once.

"What——" began Tom Merry.

Baggy spun round to the door.

On the study table he could see a large basin. He knew that basin; he had seen it before in Study No. 6. He had, in fact, had it slammed over his fat head. He had tracked the Christmas pudding to its lair.

But he was not thinking now of scoffing raisins and peel and almonds from that Christmas pudding. Finding the Terrible Three at home, he was only thinking of getting out of that study just as fast as he could.

But Baggy had no chance.

Manners jumped at him and grabbed him by a fat neck. The next moment Monty Lowther had a grip on a podgy ear.

"Ow!" roared Baggy. "I say—— Ow! I—I—I only looked in to—to speak to you fellows! Ow! I was going to say—— Wow! Stop banging my head on the door, you swabs! Wow!"

Bag, bang!

"Yarooooooh!" roared Baggy, struggling wildly. "I say, I wasn't after the pudding! I never knew it was here! I only came here to—— Yurrrrrrooooooh!"

Bag, bang!

"Ow! Help! Leggo! Ow, my napper! Wow!" yelled the hapless Baggy. "I say, if you bang my head again I'll—— Yoo-hoooooop!"

Tom Merry, laughing, opened the door. Manners and Lowther led Baggy Trimble out by his fat ears.

In the passage they kicked him together. Baggy, with a wild roar, fled down the passage.

"Come back when you want some more!" called out Monty Lowther.

"Woooooooh!"

Baggy disappeared, yelling.

Manners and Lowther went back into the study and shut the door again.

"Lucky we were here!" remarked Manners. "That fat grampus was after Blake's pudding again! Get on with it, you fellows! We haven't much time!"

And the Terrible Three resumed their search in the study.

None of them had any doubt that Lowther's surmise was correct—that Aubrey Racke's missing quids were parked in some place where their discovery would tell against Tom Merry. Only Monty's presence of mind in the dormitory had prevented an official search from starting already.

Racke, in the belief that the playful Monty had hidden his quids somewhere to pull his leg, was not going to the Housemaster.

If it was a jape, the money, of course, would be handed over sooner or later; after which Aubrey would park his quids in a safer place, safe from japing. Racke was in a savage and resentful temper, but he did not want his House-master to hear of those sovereigns—so long as they were safe!

How long Racke would remain in that belief, if the sovereigns were not restored, the chums of the Shell did not know. They were losing no time in endeavouring to unearth them.

The study seemed the likeliest place, so they were searching the study. But they had made no discovery when the bell rang for third school.

"Chuck it!" said Tom. "Blessed if I think the Worm parked them in the study at all—if you're right about what happened, Monty."

"We'll come up as soon as we're out after third school," said Manners. "We've got to chuck it now."

And the Terrible Three went down to join the Shell going into Mr. Linton's Form-room.

THE SECRET OF THE CHRISTMAS PUDDING!

"YAROOOOH!"

It was a wild roar.

Tom Merry, Manners, and Lowther jumped, all together.

The St. Jim's fellows were out, after third school. The Terrible Three had taken a brief trot round the quad, and then come up to the study again, to resume the search for what they suspected was there.

They had nearly reached Study No. 10 when that fearful howl from within the study made them jump.

Somebody, it seemed, was ahead of them there!

"Ow! Oh jiminy! Ow!" came another roar.

"Trimble!" exclaimed Tom.

"Ow! Oh, the silly rotters! Mad asses—wow!" came Baggy's anguished howl from Study No. 10. "Ow, wow, ow!"

The Terrible Three, for a moment, simply stared.

Trimble was in their study, and they could guess why he was there. No doubt the fat Baggy had had an eye on them after class; and, having seen them go out into the quad, supposed that the coast would be clear—having no idea, of course, that the three Shell fellows had a special reason for coming up to their study.

But why the fat Baggy was yelling was quite a mystery. If Baggy was scoffing Jack Blake's Christmas pudding for the second time, he might have been expected to keep quiet about it! And he was howling frantically.

Tom Merry stepped to the study door and threw it wide open.

The three juniors in the doorway looked in.

There was Baggy! He was not at the Christmas pudding at the moment. But evidently he had been at it. Pudding was smeared round Baggy's extensive mouth. The ladle lay on the floor, where it had been hurriedly dropped.

Baggy, with both hands to his fat jaw, was almost dancing with pain, as he squealed and howled. Something seemed to have hurt Baggy. What it was, the Shell fellows could not begin to guess.

"What on earth's the matter, you fat freak?" exclaimed Tom Merry.

"Ow, ow, wow!" howled Baggy, too deeply occupied with his painful jaw to worry about being found there. "Ow! You idiots! Ow!

I've nearly cracked my jaw—ow! I believe I've loosened my teeth! Wow!"

"On Blake's pudding?" grinned Lowther.

"Some pudding!"

"Ow! Oh jiminy!" groaned Baggy. "What silly idiot put ha'pennies in a Christmas pudding! Ow!"

"Ha'pennies!" said Manners blankly. "Blake never put any ha'pennies in that pudding that I know of! He was going to put threepenny-bits, if he had any."

"Ow, wow!" groaned Trimble. "A threepenny-bit wouldn't be so bad—but a ha'penny sticking in a fellow's jaw—wow!"

Baggy wriggled his fat jaw and rubbed it in anguish.

Evidently, Baggy's teeth had closed unexpectedly on something hard while he was gobbling pudding, and it had hurt Baggy! Every tooth in Baggy's fat head, in fact, was jarred by that sudden and unexpected shock!

"Blake can't have been ass enough to put ha'pennies into a pudding!" said Manners.

"Ow! There it is!" howled Baggy.

A small coin, sticky with Christmas pudding, lay on the study carpet, where the unhappy Baggy had ejected it from his mouth.

"Might be a bob, for all I know—I can't see what it is—ow! Silly fool to stick it in a Christmas pudding—wow! I believe I've broken half my teeth on it—wow!"

"Serve you jolly well right, you tuck-hunting porker!" said Tom Merry. "Boot him out of the study, you fellows!"

"Hold on!" exclaimed Monty Lowther. He picked up the sticky coin from the floor. "Don't boot the fat pig—let him out."

"Don't you be an ass," said Tom. "This is the second time he's mucked up Blake's pudding—nobody will want it after that fat porker's been grubbing into it! Boot him as far as the landing!"

"Yes, rather!" said Manners emphatically.

"Hold on, I tell you!" rapped Monty. "Let him out. Get out, Trimble!"

Monty Lowther opened the door and pushed back his chums to leave a clear passage for Trimble.

"Look here——" exclaimed Tom and Manners together.

Baggy Trimble lost no time. His fat jaw was still painful—but he did not want any more pains added to the pain in that podgy jaw. He made a bound out of the study.

Lowther slammed the door after him.

"You silly ass!" exclaimed Tom. "That fat sweep ought to be booted all over the House! That pudding's a goner now, like the other——"

"Never mind the pudding!" said Monty Lowther quietly. "Look at this!"

He held up the sticky coin.

"Oh, blow that!" said Manners. "Blake must have been an ass to stick ha'pennies in a pudding—fellow might crack his teeth on them."

"It's not a ha'penny!" said Lowther.

"Well, a bob, then—comes to the same thing."

"It's not a bob!"

"It must be one or the other, from the size!" said Tom. "What are you driving at, Monty?"

"Look!" answered Lowther.

He wiped the coin carefully with his handkerchief, and held it up again. Manners and Tom Merry stared at a gleam of gold!

"A—a—a quid!" gasped Tom.

"A sovereign!" breathed Manners.

"One of Racke's!" said Monty Lowther. He pointed to the basin on the table. "We know now where the quids were parked last night."

"In—in—in that pudding!" stammered Tom.

"In that pudding!" said Monty Lowther grimly. "About the last place we should have thought of looking, I fancy! But if Railton had searched the study for pinched quids, you can bet he would have come to the pudding, after looking everywhere else! And even if he hadn't, they'd have been found, after the pudding was cooked and fellows started on it! The Worm had you fixed all right this time, Tom!"

Tom's face was a little pale.

"The awful toad!" he breathed. "It must have been Silverson!"

"Who else?" said Lowther. "Either you pinched Racke's quids, and hid them in that pudding basin—or somebody else planted it on you! And if somebody did, we don't need telling who!" Tom Merry clenched his hands.

"We've got to stop this!" he breathed. "We've got to stop that crook—by gum, I'll go straight to the Housemaster—"

"Cut it out!" said Manners quietly. "There's not the remotest spot of proof that anybody else had a hand in this! We can't even say ourselves that it was Silverson. We believe so, that's all."

"But——" panted Tom. "Look here, if I go to Railton now——"

"What will he think?" said Manners. "The quids were taken—they turn up in our study. You were out of bed in the night—that villain made sure of that. What will it look like? That you got scared, and changed your mind?"

"Oh!" gasped Tom.

"That rotter's too deep for us!" said Manners.

"Until——"

"Until what?"

"Until we catch him at it!" said Manners.

"He's taking risks now—big risks—he's not got much time left. A fellow might have woke up and spotted him in our dorm last night! When this falls through, he will take risks again—and we may get him!"

"But now——" said Tom slowly.

"Now we've got to root the rest of those quids out of that pudding," said Monty Lowther, "and we can be jolly glad that that fat tick, Trimble, came here to scoff it—we might never have found them if Baggy hadn't cracked his jaw on one of them!"

Tom Merry nodded.

"Get going!" he said.

For the next half-hour the Terrible Three were busy in Study No. 10. That Christmas pudding had to be raked fore and aft, as it were, to extract the other four sovereigns that were mixed up in it. But, one by one, they were found and hooked out and rubbed clean.

Aubrey's five golden quids at last lay in Monty Lowther's palm, gleaming in the wintry sunshine from the window.

He slipped them into his pocket.

"Come on," he said.

The chums of the Shell left the study. As they went down the passage, Monty Lowther dropped into Study No. 7, which belonged to Racke and Crooke. He came out of that study without the sovereigns, and the Terrible Three went downstairs.

A PUZZLE FOR JAMES!

"THIRD time lucky!" said Tom Merry.

"Yaas, wathah!"

Seven juniors were busy in Study No. 10 after class that day. Once more that big basin was piled with the ingredients of a Christmas pudding, and seven pudding makers took it in turns to stir.

Jack Blake's Christmas pudding, after its many vicissitudes, was still going strong.

This was the third go, and it was going to be the last. Twice had Baggy Trimble raided that celebrated pudding. Blake and Herries, Digby and D'Arcy, had all faithfully booted the fat Baggy when they heard of the second raid. But, as Blake remarked, all the boots at St. Jim's would never keep Baggy away from a Christmas pudding if he had half a chance at it. So there was going to be a regular spell of work that evening. The pudding was going to be stirred till seven fellows were tired of stirring, and then it was going to be taken down to the cook, and that would be that.

So they stirred in turn, and the pudding progressed.

They were interrupted by a bang at the door, which flew open, revealing the angry, scowling face of Aubrey Racke.

"Hallo! Coming in to lend a hand?" asked Monty Lowther genially.

"You fool!" snarled Racke.

"Eh?"

"You silly idiot!"

"Thanks! Carry on!" said Monty imperturbably.

"Bai Jove! What's the mattah?" asked Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, turning his eyeglass in surprise and disapproval on the scowling face in the doorway. "Weally, Wacke, your mannahs gwow more fwithfuld ewevy day."

Racke did not heed the swell of St. Jim's. His angry glare was fixed on Lowther's smiling face.

"You call it a jape, I suppose!" he went on. "Well, if the quids hadn't turned up it would jolly well have looked as if your pal had pinched them, I can jolly well tell you."

Tom Merry laughed.

"Have they turned up?" he asked.

"Found 'em?" grinned Lowther.

"Oh, don't be a fool!" snarled Racke. "I found them in the inkpot in my study, and I know who put them there—a silly, idiotic, japing ass!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You can cackle!" hooted Aubrey, scowling round at laughing faces. "But taking a fellow's money and hiding it isn't what I call a jape. I've had no end of trouble wiping the ink off those sovereigns!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Glad you didn't go to Railton about it, after all?" drawled Lowther. "Fancy old Railton getting after your missing quids, and finding them parked in the inkpot in your own study!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled the juniors in Study No. 10.

"Well, you won't have another chance to play silly tricks with them," said Racke. "As they don't seem safe in a fellow's pocket, I shall keep them locked up after this. You fool!"

"Go it!"

"You dummy!"

"Hear, hear!"

"You silly idiot!" yelled Racke.

Monty Lowther was stirring in the basin. He

suddenly whipped out the wooden ladle, loaded with Christmas pudding, and swept it through the air towards the doorway. A squashy chunk of pudding shot off it and landed with a squashy sound in the middle of Aubrey Racke's features.

Aubrey staggered and spluttered.

"Goal!" chuckled Blake.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Urrrrrgh!" gurgled Racke.

"Have a spot more?" asked Lowther affably. "Jolly good Christmas pudding! Trimble likes it raw—do you? Here's some more coming, anyhow!"

Aubrey Racke did not wait for any more. He jumped away from the doorway and retreated down the passage, dabbing at Christmas pudding.

"Bai Jove, though," remarked Arthur Augustus, turning his eyeglass thoughtfully on Monty Lowther, "playin' twicks with money is wathah fatheaded, Lowthah! It serves Wacke wight, but I wegard you as an ass!"

"How could you regard me as anything else?" asked Lowther. "Being an ass, you can naturally only regard a fellow from an ass' point of view."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Gussy's right, though," said Blake. "I think—"

"You do!" ejaculated Monty, in surprise. "That's rather a record for Study No. 6, isn't it?"

"Get on with the pudding, you fellows!" said Tom Merry, laughing. "We've got to get through before prep. Go it!"

And the pudding-makers went it. And they stirred and stirred and stirred, and Monty Lowther sighed sadly when, having remarked

that it was sturdy work, nobody in the study realised that he was making a pun.

Just before the bell went for prep that pudding, as thoroughly stirred as any pudding ever had been, was carried down and consigned to the cook, who had kindly consented to attend to the boiling thereof.

And Baggy Trimble, from the landing, watched it go with a longing eye. It was, as Tom Merry had said, third time lucky. Jack Blake's Christmas pudding was safely landed at last, and gone from Baggy's longing gaze like a beautiful dream!

JAMES SILVERSON, the next day, was a puzzled man.

There had been no row in the Shell, Racke, about the last fellow at St. Jim's to take such a less patiently, had said nothing about the missing quids.

James, naturally, never knew that they had turned up in Racke's inkpot in his study. Had James known that he would probably have been still more puzzled.

He could not venture to make any inquiry. He kept his eyes and ears open, but no news came his way.

How his latest scheme had missed fire he could not begin to guess, but it seemed that somehow it had. James really began to wonder whether cunning rascality was a paying game, after all. He had to admit that it did not seem to be getting him anywhere.

Keeping his eyes and his ears open, James learned, a few days later, that a Christmas supper-party was going on in the junior day-room. He looked into that apartment. As he easily guessed, the Christmas pudding was on the table. Quite a crowd of fellows had gathered to dispose of it, and every face wore a cheery smile—Baggy Trimble, who had been admitted to the feast because it was Christmastide, and a time for forgiving sinners, grinning with happy anticipation from one fat ear to the other.

"Bai Jove! Heah's Mr. Silvahson!" said Arthur Augustus. He rose, and made his Form-master his best bow.

Gussy did not like Silverson; he loathed him. But Gussy was always polite.

"Pewwaps you would care to join us, sir?" he said gracefully. "Blake, pway place a chaih for Mr. Silvahson."

To the surprise of the party, James accepted that invitation—and a portion of Christmas pudding.

Tom Merry, Manners, and Lowther glanced at one another. They knew what James expected to turn up in the course of the demolition of that Christmas pudding, and they smiled.

Nothing turned up!

That Christmas pudding was disposed of to the last crumb and the last plum. Everybody pronounced it ripping. Not till it was finished did James leave that merry party. And he went a mere puzzled man than ever. What had become of those quids James never knew—unless, which seemed improbable, some of the supper-party had swallowed them, along with Jack Blake's Christmas Pudding!

Next Wednesday: "THE 'WORM' TAKES THE COUNT!" Don't Miss It!

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TOLD IN THE TUCKSHOP!

UNCLE EGBERT'S
INVENTION!

"ROLLER - SKATING," said Dawson of the Fifth at Greystones, picking up his ginger-beer from the tuckshop counter, "seems to be coming more popular than ever nowadays. According to the newspapers, roller-skating rinks are starting in lots of towns and districts which had never had 'em before."

"Well, it's jolly good fun, you know," said Russell major. "Without wishing to boast," he went on modestly, "I used to be pretty hot stuff myself on roller-skates when I was a kid. I remember once—"

"Quite so," put in Goffin, the new boy. "We most of us can remember some thrilling or amusing performance of ours on roller-skates during our infant days; but speaking of serious roller-skating, I will venture to say, without the slightest fear of contradiction, that in the whole stirring history of the sport there never has and never will be such an extraordinary and amazing exploit as that of my Uncle Egbert. You wish me to tell you about it?"

"No, don't bother!" put in a voice hastily. But Goffin ignored the interruption.

As many of you are already aware (said Goffin) my Uncle Egbert was an inventor, and a jolly smart inventor as well. Of course, like every other inventor, Uncle Egbert had his failures, but you can take it from me that they were precious few and far between.

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By GEO. E. ROCHESTER.

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*This Week's Story:*

**THE MILLION-DOLLAR SKATES!**

At the time of which I'm speaking, Uncle Egbert had taken a little cottage at the well-known and popular seaside resort of Sandbeach. It was the height of the summer season, and Uncle Egbert wanted to be beside the seaside whilst engaged on his latest invention.

Uncle Egbert, again like lots of other inventors, was always very secretive about what he was inventing until the thing was either an accomplished fact, or else cast on to the scrap-heap of failure.

Being a genial, friendly sort of a fellow, Uncle Egbert was always pretty popular wherever he happened to be, and although he was a stranger to Sandbeach he soon made plenty of friends in the place.

Discovering that he was an inventor, and that he was busy inventing something at that very moment, all Uncle Egbert's friends and acquaintances in Sandbeach were very curious to know what the invention could be.

But Uncle Egbert wouldn't tell them. All they could get out of him was a mysterious, enigmatical smile and the remark:

"All in good time, my friends. Have patience until the invention is completed, then you will see it."

Well, that made everybody keener than ever, of course, to know just what this mysterious invention could be, and amongst the most pressing and most inquisitive of Uncle Egbert's newly-made friends was a fat American lady named Mrs. Wollerstein.

Mrs. Wollerstein was the wife of Wally K. Wollerstein, the American millionaire, and she

was, of course, disgustingly rich. She was staying at the best hotel in Sandbeach, with a staff of her own servants, and a bodyguard for her baby son Woolfuls, or, to give the poor little blighter his proper name, Abraham Roosevelt Wollerstein.

Actually, it was solely because of the kid that Mrs. Wollerstein was staying over here in England. There had been so many attempts to kidnap him in America that poor old Wally K. Wollerstein had got fed-up with it, and had packed him off to England, together with an armed bodyguard, his mother, and a staff of servants.

The armed bodyguard consisted of two ex-gangsters named Bugs Moloney and Gold-Tooth Charlie, and they were a pretty tough pair. When the two nurses who looked after the kid had him out in his perambulator in the mornings, you'd see Bugs Moloney and Gold-Tooth Charlie lounging along, one on each side of the perambulator, and everybody said it would take a very smart bunch of kidnapers indeed to snatch Abraham Roosevelt, so long as Bugs Moloney and Gold-Tooth Charlie were around.

Anyway, as I was saying, Mrs. Wollerstein, the kid's mother, was one of the most prising of Uncle Egbert's friends to know what his new invention would be.

"Say, I do really wish you'd tell me, Mr. Goffin," she gushed one afternoon when Uncle Egbert was having tea with her on the terrace in front of her hotel. "I think it's real mean of you not to tell just me. I'll keep it an awful close secret if you'll tell me, honest I will!"

Uncle Egbert smiled and shook his head. "You'll know to-morrow," he said. "I'll have the invention finished to-night, and will be trying it out in the morning."

The next morning (continued Goffin) the strollers on the promenade at Sandbeach were considerably surprised and interested to see Uncle Egbert gliding smoothly and silently along on a pair of rubber-tired roller-skates which seemed to require no propulsion on his part.

He was bowing and smiling and raising his hat to the people he knew, and weaving his way in and out of the throng as easily and as gracefully as any thing.

"Hallo, Goffin! What the thump's those things you've got on your feet?" exclaimed a man he knew named Green, who was accompanied by a friend named Polson.

"It's the invention I've been working on," beamed Uncle Egbert, gliding to a smooth and silent halt beside Green and Polson. "They're a pair of electric roller-skates. I carry the battery in my pocket, the wires run down my trouser legs, and there you are! Simple, isn't it?"

"It jolly well is!" exclaimed Green admiringly. "I think it's an excellent idea. I congratulate you, Goffin!"

"Thanks!" said Uncle Egbert, flushing with pleased but modest pride.

"The only snag that I can see," remarked Polson, "is in controlling the speed."

"What do you mean—in controlling the speed?" snapped Uncle Egbert, who had never cared very much for Polson.

"Well, it would be a bit awkward, wouldn't it, if you met, let us say, some invalid friend who was tottering slowly along the front?" explained Polson. "You wouldn't be able to adapt your rate of progress to his, would you, supposing you wanted to have a chat with him?"

"Yes, of course I would!" snorted Uncle

Egbert. "The speed of the skates is controlled by a switch attached to the battery. I can go at an absolute crawl if I like, or, on the other hand, I can flash along at a speed of sixty miles per hour."

"Wha-a-at?" ejaculated Green and Polson together. "Oh, I say, Goffin, that's a bit thick, you know! You can't make us swallow that one. Sixty miles per hour! Ha, ha! That's good, that is!"

"You don't believe me, I see," said Uncle Egbert, with ominous calm.

"No, we don't!" said Polson bluntly. "Sixty miles per hour, indeed, on those skates. It's absolute rot! You couldn't do it!"

"Is that so?" said Uncle Egbert, eyeing him coldly. "Very well, then, I'll tell you what I'll do. I will make a small wager of five shillings each with you and Green that I can attain a speed of sixty miles per hour on these skates."

"You can make it five pounds, so far as I'm concerned," sneered Polson. "Fifty pounds—five hundred pounds—as much as you like! I'm not fussy!"

"As I have no wish to take your money, or to bet on what I know to be a certainty, I shall limit the wager to five shillings," said Uncle Egbert calmly. "What is more, I will demonstrate to you and Green this very moment that these skates are capable of attaining a speed of sixty miles per hour."

"What, here?" exclaimed Green. "You can't go buzzing along at sixty miles an hour here, Goffin. There's far too many people about!"

"I am aware of that," said Uncle Egbert. "What I propose we do is proceed to the other end of the promenade. There are neither seats nor amusements there. Consequently that part of the promenade is invariably very quiet and deserted. I will there give both you and Polson irrefutable proof that my electric skates are capable of developing a speed of sixty miles per hour."

"Come on, then, let's see you do it!" cried Polson, moving off towards the part of the promenade suggested by Uncle Egbert.

### NON-STOP!

**W**ITH Uncle Egbert gliding along beside them (went on Goffin), Green and Polson reached the end of the promenade. I don't know whether any of you fellows know Sandbeach, but if you do you'll recollect that the promenade stretches for about three miles, and, as Uncle Egbert had said, the far end of it is invariably very quiet and deserted.

It was so on this particular morning. As Uncle Egbert, Green, and Polson reached the end and turned, a good half-mile of promenade stretched away before them, smooth, broad, and deserted save for one or two idly strolling visitors, and Uncle Egbert knew he could avoid them all right.

"Right you are, then, off you go!" said Polson nastily. "I reckon the first shelter yonder is half a mile away, so at sixty miles an hour you should reach it in about thirty seconds from here."

"I've got to get up speed first," returned Uncle Egbert. "You're working that time out on a flying start."

"Oh, yes. I thought there'd be a catch in it!" jeered Polson.

"There's no catch in it at all!" snapped Uncle Egbert. "If I reach the shelter within thirty-five seconds, will you be satisfied?"



"We certainly will!" cried Green and Polson together.

"Very well, then!" said Uncle Egbert. "Here goes!"

He stood an instant, staring fixedly along the broad, smooth stretch of promenade, his fingers on the control switch of his patent skates. Then as he pulled the switch over to full speed ahead, there came a shrill, high-pitched whine of the skate motors, and Uncle Egbert flashed away along the promenade like a bullet out of a gun.

"My hat, he's going to do it!" gasped Green, gaping absolutely pop-eyed after the whizzing figure of Uncle Egbert.

"He is and all!" ejaculated Polson, his eyes nearly bulging out of their sockets. "I—I wouldn't have believed it!"

"There, he's passed the shelter," said Green. "He's won his bet all right. Thank goodness he didn't make it more than five shillings. Hallo, where's he off to? Why doesn't he stop?"

"I suppose he's got to slow down gradually," said Polson, staring after Uncle Egbert, who had passed the shelter, and was flashing on like a meteor towards the more crowded part of the promenade.

But Uncle Egbert wasn't slowing down gradually. He wasn't slowing down at all, for to his absolute horror the control switch had jammed, and he was hurtling on towards the crowded part of the promenade, completely out of control!

"My goodness!" he bleated, his eyes sticking out like organ stops as he juggled frantically with the switch. "Oh, my goodness, it'll be dreadful if I hit anything!"

It would be more than dreadful. It would be absolutely fatal. But he couldn't budge the wretched switch the fraction of an inch, and he flashed onwards, the wind whistling past his ears.

A fat man and his wife were strolling just ahead of him, their backs to him. With a squawk of terror, Uncle Egbert swayed to one side, flashed past them, and hurtled on.

"Coo, lumme!" ejaculated the fat man, and got such a fright that he sat down violently and involuntarily on the concrete.

An infant with a bucket and spade was the next obstruction in Uncle Egbert's path. The kid saw Uncle Egbert whizzing towards him and stood absolutely petrified. How Uncle Egbert did it, he never knew, but somehow he managed to stick his toes out, and then in again, with the result that a pair of human calipers—Uncle Egbert's legs—flashed over the infant, and were gone.

"Oh, dearie me!" gasped Uncle Egbert in horror, leaning over at an acute angle to avoid the Stop Me and Buy One box-tricycle of an ice-cream vendor.

Uncle Egbert nearly stopped him all right, but he certainly wouldn't have been in a condition to buy one if he had done so. However, he flashed safely by, and then—horror upon horror—he saw, right in his path, the expensive perambulator, the nurses and the bodyguard of precious Abraham Roosevelt Wollerstein, together with the stout and ample figure of Mrs. Wollerstein herself.

The party was stationary, the perambulator between them. Mrs. Wollerstein and the two nurses were on the seaward side of the perambulator, their backs to it as they watched a party of happy, laughing bathers in the water. Bugs Moloney and Gold-Tooth Charlie were lounging on the other side of the perambulator, conversing idly, and also looking out to sea.

Of the whole party, Abraham Roosevelt, sitting

up in his perambulator, was the only one to see Uncle Egbert whizzing towards him, and the sight pleased him so much that he bumbled with infantile delight.

Uncle Egbert was glaring wildly ahead. No matter how far he leaned over, it was going to be impossible for him to flash past the perambulator on the seaward side, for the ample figure of Mrs. Wollerstein was taking up too much room, and he was certain he'd crash into her and the nurses.

The only way in which to pass the party was to sway to the other side and try to flash past Bugs Moloney and Gold-Tooth Charlie. Even then it was going to be a jolly close shave, for both Bugs Moloney and Gold-Tooth Charlie were big, well-built fellows, and occupied a good bit of space.

However, Uncle Egbert decided to try it; then he gave a gasp of dismay, for the way past Bugs Moloney and Gold-Tooth Charlie became suddenly blocked by a school crocodile of girls, walking sedately two by two.

Uncle Egbert let out an agonised hoot of warning, which was lost and hurled away behind him by the wind whistling past his head.

He had one split instant of time in which to decide what to do, and he did it—the only thing possible. Whipping his fingers from the jammed control switch, he thrust both his hands out in front of him. Next instant they grabbed at the handle of the perambulator and he was away, flashing between the dumbfounded bodyguard and the blissfully unconscious ladies of the party, and whizzing away along the promenade, propelling Abraham Roosevelt in front of him at breakneck speed.

"Hey!" roared Bugs Moloney, recovering from his petrified astonishment at suddenly seeing the Wollerstein heir whipped away from under his very nose. "Hey, youse, stop, or I'll plug yuh!"

Uncle Egbert didn't stop for the simple reason that he couldn't; and uttering strange gangster oaths and threats, Bugs Moloney and Gold-Tooth Charlie went pelting after him, yanking their guns from their pockets as they ran.

Startled by the hubbub, Mrs. Wollerstein and the nurses turned, and when they saw that precious Abraham Roosevelt had vanished, perambulator and all, they gave such a scream that holiday-makers on the pier half a mile away thought the Sandbeach Belle pleasure steamer had run aground, and was blowing her siren for assistance.

"My precious lamb, where is he?" wailed Mrs. Wollerstein. "Oh where, oh where has he gone?"

"A gentleman on roller skates, travelling at a terrific speed, has just run off with him," said a member of the school crocodile primly.

"Kidnapped!" shrieked Mrs. Wollerstein. "Kidnapped in broad daylight on Sandbeach front. Oh, my poor, poor Woolfies!" And with that she promptly threw a faint.

By the time she'd come round—the ice-cream man having administered first aid by rubbing a cornet over her face and behind her ears, saying the coldness would help—Messrs. Green and Polson had come running up, puffing and blowing like a couple of grampuses.

"What is it, Mrs. Wollerstein—what's happened?" panted Green.

"A man on roller skates has run off with my poor, precious Woolfies!" sobbed Mrs. Wollerstein.

"Goffin!" exclaimed both Green and Polson together.

"What?" ejaculated Mrs. Wollerstein, taking her handkerchief from her eyes and staring at them as though she couldn't believe her ears.

"It's Egbert Goffin!" cried Polson. "He's the fellow on roller skates. By Jove, I can see it all now!" he cried dramatically. "He comes to Sandbeach and ingratiates himself with us and pretends he's an inventor, and all the time he's just a nasty, sneaking low-down crook and kidnapper who's been waiting his chance to kidnap that poor, dear, innocent little child. Well, don't you pay him any ransom money, Mrs. Wollerstein," he concluded severely. "Not a ha'penny. I wouldn't!"

"I know now what he meant when he said I'd know to-day what his secret was," sobbed Mrs.

know how amazingly quickly panic does spread—and visitors and holiday-makers were scattering to give him a clear run through to wherever he happened to be heading for.

The trouble was, poor Uncle Egbert hadn't the slightest idea where he was heading for. All he wanted to do—what he was wishing more passionately than anything in his life to be able to do—was to stop the wretched skates and restore Abraham Roosevelt to his distracted mother.

But he couldn't, because all his attention was concentrated on preventing the perambulator from crashing into some seat, shelter or holiday-maker, and he daren't take his hands from the handle.

Not that Abraham Roosevelt was worrying.



In a flash Uncle Egbert grabbed at the handle of the perambulator, and went whizzing along the promenade, propelling Abraham Roosevelt in front of him at breakneck speed.

"Hey!" roared Bugs Moloney. "Stop, or I'll plug yuh!"

Wollerstein. "Oh, the wretch! I can see the smile he gave when he said it, the monster! I thought at the time it was an evil, tigerish sort of smile, but I never, never guessed he was planning to kidnap my poor little Woolfes!"

"Well, never mind," said Green consolingly. "The police will get him, don't you worry, and he'll get seven years for this, you'll see!"

#### A WILD CHASE!

TO return to Uncle Egbert (said Goffin), he was absolutely frozen with horror as he went whizzing along the promenade with Abraham Roosevelt in the perambulator.

Time and again he missed shelters, seats, kiosks and holiday-makers by the very skin of his teeth, but by this time the alarm was spreading—you

On the contrary, he was thoroughly enjoying this novel outing, chuckling with delight at being whizzed along so rapidly, and goo-gooing and making other baby sounds indicative of pleasure at Uncle Egbert.

"If only you knew!" groaned poor Uncle Egbert. "If only you knew, you'd jolly well take that grin off your face. Oh, my goodness!"

By a miracle of good luck, aided by a swift jerk on the handle of the perambulator, he avoided a whelk stall by the fraction of an inch and went charging straight towards the bandstand.

Another jerk on the handle of the perambulator, and a swift sway to the left, and he went hurtling round the bandstand, completing two whirlwind circuits before he got the perambulator

to draw attention to Uncle Egbert and have him pursued, for by this time motor-cars and bicycles, motor-bikes and buses were all pouring after Uncle Egbert in an ever-increasing stream.

In one of the foremost cars were Bugs Moloney and Gold-Tooth Charlie. They'd commandeered the car from a car rank without bothering to ask the owner's permission, and with Gold-Tooth Charlie at the wheel, they were roaring in the wake of Uncle Egbert with as complete disregard for traffic lights as he apparently had.

"Stop, youse!" bellowed Bugs Moloney, leaning over the windscreen and waving his gun. "Stop, yuh yellor rat, or I'll let daylight through yuh!"

He would have used his gun long before this had it not been for the almost certain risk of hitting some innocent townsman or holiday-maker, but he was just waiting his opportunity to let fly at Uncle Egbert.

You might wonder (said Goffin) why Uncle Egbert kept hanging on to the handle of the perambulator instead of letting it go. A moment's thought, however, will show you that travelling at the speed he was, it was absolutely impossible for him to leave go of the perambulator without serious risk to young Abraham Roosevelt, for the perambulator would certainly have crashed.

Perilous though the infant's position was under the control of Uncle Egbert, it would have been infinitely more perilous had Uncle Egbert let go. So still hanging on to the handle, Uncle Egbert whizzed through the thinning outskirts of Sand-beach and went flashing along the road in the direction of Puddlecombe, ten miles distant.

Now that he was out on the open road he felt a lot safer, but all the same he was feeling pretty ghastly, because he had visions of himself and the perambulator flashing about the countryside until eventually the electric battery of the skates ran down.

Now that he hadn't to dodge in and out of the traffic, he was rapidly outdistancing his pursuers, which was a jolly good job for him, because Bugs Moloney was now shooting off his gun as fast as he could in the hope of winging Uncle Egbert at last.

But the distance between them was too great for that, and feeling that he might now safely experiment with the control switch again, Uncle Egbert took one hand from the handle of the perambulator and started to juggle frenziedly with the switch.

His heart sank as the switch still remained jammed, and he went at it with renewed efforts. Then, to his vast delight and relief, the switch moved, the high-pitched whine of the skate motors died away, and Uncle Egbert and the perambulator came gliding smoothly to a halt on a stretch of deserted road.

"Phew!" gasped Uncle Egbert, pulling out his handkerchief and mopping at his perspiring brow with a trembling hand. "Phew! Thank goodness that's over! What a dreadful experience—eh, my little man?"

His little man, in other words Abraham Roosevelt, started goo-gooing violently and jumping up and down in his perambulator as though urging Uncle Egbert to do it again.

"No, no more," laughed Uncle Egbert shakily. "Enough's as good as a feast any day, and you've had ever such a nice ridey-pidey—haven't you, now?"

It's a remarkable thing (said Goffin) how even

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the strongest and most intellectual of men will talk the most utter drivel when addressing an infant of tender years. I've noticed it on a lot of occasions, and I suppose you have as well.

However, to get on. Having mopped his brow and got his breath back, Uncle Egbert said:

"Well, now, I suppose I'd better take you back to mumsey-wumsey, eh, and say how sorry-worry I am at running away with her 'ickle pickle wickles? I only hope," he added feelingly, more to himself than to Abraham Roosevelt, "that she will accept my explanation and apologies in the proper spirit. It is really most distressing and upsetting, the whole business. But, anyhow," he added, brightening up, "I've definitely proved that my patent skates are certainly the goods. In fact, they're the cat's whisker, as that quaint fellow Bugs Moloney would say!"

You've got to understand (said Goffin) that Uncle Egbert hadn't the faintest idea he'd been pursued. How could he have, when his whole attention had been absolutely concentrated on weaving in and out of the traffic and keeping the perambulator and its contents intact?

Consequently, he got the most awful shock when, without warning, a whole fleet of cars suddenly roared round the bend of the road behind him and someone in the leading car started firing at him with a gun and bawling at the top of his voice.

"Why, bless my soul!" ejaculated Uncle Egbert in dire alarm, as a bullet whistled past his head. "I—I really believe I'm going to be attacked!"

He wasn't going to be attacked—he was being attacked right there and then, for another couple of bullets sang past his head, and above the roar of approaching engines sounded the bellowing voice of that quaint fellow Bugs Moloney.

"Leave him to me, fellows! I'll shoot the perishin' pole-cat dead in case he's armed!"

Another bullet whistled past Uncle Egbert's head, and, realising that his attackers' policy seemed to be to shoot first and talk afterwards, Uncle Egbert gave a bleat of alarm, pressed the switch of his electric skates, and shot away along the road, leaving Abraham Roosevelt to be collected by the pursuing squad.

"Keep goin', Charlie!" yelled Bugs Moloney. "The kid looks O.K., but we wanna git that skunk!"

Gold-Tooth Charlie kept going, roaring past the perambulator and thundering in pursuit of Uncle Egbert with his foot hard down on the accelerator.

Rapidly reloading his gun, Bugs Moloney leaned forward over the windscreen and took careful aim at Uncle Egbert, who was whizzing away in front.

"Missed ag'in!" he said disgustedly, as Uncle Egbert flashed round a bend in the road.

But the bullet had whistled sufficiently close past Uncle Egbert's head to warn him that the sooner he got out of range the better; so, pulling the control switch over to full speed, he shot on along the road like a bit of greased lightning.

He flashed past the high hedge enclosing the grounds of some large house. He was keeping well into the left-hand side of the road so as to avoid any oncoming traffic, and, as he reached the drive gates of the house, disaster happened in the form of a bathchair.

With a man in a bowler hat towing it, and an elderly, severe-looking lady sitting in it, the bathchair emerged through the gates and turned towards Puddlecombe, right under the very nose of the whizzing Uncle Egbert!

## DISASTER!

UNCLE EGBERT had no time to avoid the bathchair. Even a swift lean over to the right would not have got him past the bathchair. So, with a groan of dismay, he did exactly what he had done in the case of the perambulator—thrust out his hands and grabbed the handle at the back of the bathchair.

Next instant the bathchair was hurtling forward, propelled by Uncle Egbert. In that same split second of time the man who had been towing the bathchair performed a most extraordinary and unpremeditated antic. The handle of the bathchair smote him violently in the seat of his trousers, his legs shot up, and he slid rapidly on his back down the handle, to collapse in a heap in the bathchair at the old lady's feet.

It transpired later (said Goffin) that the old lady was none other than Lady Eryntrude Mablethorpe, an old-fashioned person who detested motor-cars and anything in the way of speed. That's why she always took her morning outing in a bathchair, towed by Perkins, the butler, the gentleman who was now frantically clawing at her rugs as he tried to struggle to his feet.

"Perkins," screamed Lady Mablethorpe, as the bathchair whizzed on along the road, "what's happened? What's the matter? Are we bewitched—or what?"

The petrified Perkins saw Uncle Egbert's head and shoulders above the back of the bathchair.

"There's a—there's a man pushing us, my lady!" he gasped.

"A man pushing us?" shrieked Lady Mablethorpe, as the hedgerows whizzed dizzily past. "How dare he! Tell him to desist at once! Is he running?"

Considering that the bathchair was hurtling along at about fifty miles an hour, this latter question was pretty good.

"No, my lady; he—he seems to be gliding!" gasped Perkins, crouched at her feet.

"Gliding?" yelled Lady Mablethorpe, giving him a box round the ears which nearly knocked him out of the bathchair. "How can he be gliding, you stupid creature? Tell him to stop it at once! D'you hear? At once!"

"Hi, stop it, you!" shouted the wretched Perkins, glaring up at Uncle Egbert.

But, unless he slowed down almost to a halt, Uncle Egbert couldn't let go the chair. And he didn't slow down; for one swift glance behind him had shown him Bugs Moloney and Gold-Tooth Charlie coming hurtling round the bend behind him, taking the corner on two wheels, and with a skidding scream of tyres.

"Will you leave go this chair before I knock your blessed head off?" roared Perkins.

"I can't!" screamed Uncle Egbert in an effort to make himself heard above the whistling of the wind. "I can't let go—explain later—all a mistake!"

"What's he say?" screeched Lady Mablethorpe. "I don't know, my lady," gasped Perkins. "I think he's a madman or something—an escaped looney!"

"But how's he going at such a dreadful speed?" screamed Lady Mablethorpe. "How's he doing it?"

"I don't know, my lady," groaned Perkins. "I—I'm going to jump out!"

"No, you're not!" yelled Lady Mablethorpe, grabbing him by the jacket. "I forbid you to

(Continued on page 36.)



### STRAIGHT FROM THE SHOULDER!

**I**T'S young Nugent!"

Jack Drake followed that remark with a low whistle.

"The young ass!" growled Rodney.

The chums of the Greyfriars Remove were sauntering along the footpath through Friardale Wood when they came on "young Nugent."

Dicky Nugent of the Second Form at Greyfriars was not alone.

He was in conversation with a fat, squat man who was wearing a check suit and a bowler hat on one side of his head. A cigarette was in the corner of his mouth.

That gentleman was not an acquaintance of Rodney and Drake; but they had seen him before, lounging about the Bird-in-Hand Inn. His name was Joseph Banks, and he followed, or had followed, the profession of a bookmaker, and had been warned off more racecourses than he could remember. The sight of a Greyfriars fag in conversation with such a gentleman naturally made the Remove fellows stare.

Nugent minor was deep in his conversation, and he did not look up as the Removites came along the grassy footpath. Drake and Rodney paused, and frowned.

"The young ass!" repeated Rodney. "What's he got to do with a blackguard like that? His brother would be waxy if he knew."

Drake nodded.

He rather liked Frank Nugent of the Remove Form, and he had noticed—as, in fact, all Greyfriars had noticed—that Frank had had a considerable amount of trouble with his wilful minor. Frank was expected by his people to keep an elder-brotherly eye on Dicky, and Dicky strongly resented having an eye kept on him. Hence the trouble that sometimes arose.

Mr. Banks knocked the ash off his cigarette, and in doing so he glanced up and observed the two juniors on the footpath.

He gave a little cough.

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# HIS BLACK SHEEP BROTHER!

By Frank Richards.

It was quite a secluded part of the wood, and doubtless Nugent minor's meeting with the bookmaker was very secret. Drake and Rodney had happened on it quite by chance.

"What's up?" asked the fag, turning his head to follow Mr. Banks' startled glance.

Then he saw the two Removites.

The colour flushed into his cheeks. Whatever might be Dicky's business with Mr. Banks, he had the grace to feel ashamed of it.

"Come on!" muttered Rodney. "We've no business here, Drake."

Jack Drake hesitated.

"I think I'd better speak to that kid," he said. "The young ass oughtn't to be with that blackguard."

"You're not his major," said Rodney, with a faint smile. "His major has trouble enough with him. No good any other fellow butting in."

"I'm going to try," said Drake.

He walked on towards the two, and Rodney followed him. Rodney was quite ready to chip in if it would do any good, but he doubted very much whether there was any good to be done.

"Arternoon, young gents!" said Mr. Banks affably. "Jest 'appened to meet Master Dicky 'ere by accident, you know."

Drake knitted his brows.

Nugent minor's look was proof enough that the meeting was not an accidental one, to say nothing of the deep and earnest discussion he had been engaged in when the Remove fellows came along.

"Coming back to Greyfriars now, Dicky?" asked Drake, without heeding Mr. Banks' affable greeting.

"No!" said Nugent minor curtly.

"Better come, kid."

Dicky stared at him.

"I'll come when I like," he answered.

"Look here, Nugent minor," said Drake directly, "the less you have to say to this man the better. You'd better come along."

"Well, I like that!" said Mr. Banks in a tone that implied that he did not like it at all.

Nugent minor stared at Drake in surprise and annoyance.

"I don't remember asking you for any fatherly advice, Drake," he said sarcastically. "Suppose you keep it till it's asked for?"

"Ear, 'ear!" said Mr. Banks derisively.

"If your brother saw you—" said Drake.

"Both my brother! I have jaw enough from Frank without another lot from you," interrupted Nugent minor. "What the thump does it matter to you whom I speak to? Can't you mind your own business?"

"Better come on, Drake," murmured Rodney.

Drake's eyes were glinting.

He was greatly inclined to take Nugent minor

by the collar, and administer a sound shaking—which was probably just what Master Dicky wanted. But he restrained that desire.

"You know you'd get into a row at Greyfriars if you were seen speaking to this man, kid," said Drake patiently.

"That's my bisney," said Nugent minor. "You can go and sneak to my Form-master if you like, of course."

"You cheeky cub!" roared Drake, his temper giving way a little.

Nugent minor curled his lip.

"Is that all you've got to say?" he asked. "If it is, you may as well travel. I don't want your company."

There was a chuckle from Mr. Banks.

"That's the stuff to give 'im!" he remarked. "Wot does he want comin' buttin' in when a young gent is talkin' to another gent?"

Drake carefully avoided taking any notice of the bookmaker. He did not want the scene to end in a row if he could help it. But Mr. Banks was growing more and more aggressive every moment. Mr. Banks was in one of his hard-up periods, and even the small gains he hoped to obtain from a reckless schoolboy were an object to him.

"You mind your own business," he continued. "Buttin' in and slanging a man! Fur two pins I'd lay my stick round you."

"Do!" said Dicky Nugent.

"Good mind to, by gum!" said Mr. Banks. Drake compressed his lips.

He doubted a little whether he had acted wisely in butting in; but, after all, Nugent minor belonged to his school, and it went against the grain to see the foolish boy victimised by a loafing rascal like Joseph Banks.

"Well, what are you hanging on for?" asked Dicky Nugent. "I think I mentioned that I don't want your company, Drake."

"I'm not going to leave you with that blackguard," said Jack Drake determinedly.

"Who you calling names?" demanded Mr. Banks.

"Come on, kid," said Drake. "I'll see you home to the school."

Nugent minor gave him a furious look.

"You won't, you interfering rotter!" he exclaimed shrilly. "Mind your own business! Let go my arm, you cad, or I'll kick your shins!"

Drake tightened his grasp on the fag's arm. He was angry and determined.

"This way!" he said.

Whack!

Mr. Banks chipped in at that point.

In an unfortunate moment for himself, he raised his stick and brought it down across Jack Drake's shoulders.

"Let the young gent alone!" he said.

Drake released Nugent minor instantly, and turned on the fat bookmaker, with a blaze in his eyes that made Mr. Banks start back.

The stick went up again, but Mr. Banks had no time to use it. Drake came at him with a rush, and his clenched fist crashed into the sharper's flabby face.

"Yooop!" spluttered Mr. Banks.

He went over on his back with a crash, his feet flying into the air as he landed.

The stick flew from his hand, and Rodney picked it up and tossed it away among the treestops.

Mr. Banks lay gasping and spluttering, and Drake stood over him, breathing hard, his fists clenched and his eyes ablaze.

"Now, you blackguard, get up if you want some more!" he said, between his teeth.

Mr. Banks sat up.

"Ow! Yow! Wow!" he mumbled. "You young 'ooligan! I'll 'ave the lor on you for this 'ere! Wow! Wow!"

He did not rise to his feet. He was a man against a boy; but that hefty drive, straight from the shoulder, had taken all the belligerency out of Joseph Banks. He sat and gasped, and glared up at Drake.

"You rotter!" muttered Dicky Nugent, in helpless rage. "You rotter! I—I wish I could lick you!"

Drake did not heed the fag.

"Do you want any more, Mr. Banks?" he asked grimly.

"Yow-ow! You keep your 'ands to yourself, you blooming 'ooligan!" mumbled Mr. Banks.

"Then get out!" said Drake.

"What?"

"Get out! If you don't clear out of this at once, I'll begin on you with my boot!" said Drake savagely. "You ought to be ashamed of yourself, making a fool of a silly kid like that! If you don't want to be kicked, get out!"

Mr. Banks rolled hastily away out of reach of Drake's boot. At a safe distance he gained his feet, and blinked round for his stick. But his stick was not to be seen.

"Are you going?" demanded Drake, taking a step towards him.

"Don't go, Banks!" shouted Dicky Nugent.

Mr. Banks did not answer either of them. He turned his back and tramped away, gritting his teeth, and scowling savagely, and dabbing his nose with a grubby handkerchief. Mr. Banks, evidently, had had enough for one afternoon.

Drake watched him out of sight along the footpath towards the village. Then he turned away in the opposite direction.

"Come on, Rodney!"

"You rotter!" yelled Nugent minor.

Drake gave him a glance. The temptation was strong upon him again to give Master Dicky what he was asking for; but once more he restrained himself, and walked away with his chum. Dicky Nugent glared after him. All the passionate temper in Dicky was roused, and he was trembling with rage and chagrin.

"You rotter!" he yelled. "You awful rotter!"

Drake did not turn his head.

Dicky stared round him furiously, and picked up a fragment of a broken branch. He was too reckless and infuriated to care what he did.

Whiz!

"Oh!" gasped Drake.

The flying piece of wood caught him on the back of the head.

"Take that, you rotter!" yelled Dicky.

Drake staggered forward. He had received a hard knock, and it made his head ache. It was the last straw, and his good temper failed him. He spun round, and came striding back towards Dicky Nugent.

"You young ruffian!" he gasped. "I'll—"

"Rotter!" howled Dicky defiantly. "I'll kick your shins! I'll—"

Drake grasped him by the collar with his left hand, jerked him over, and smacked him soundly with his right. The smacks were hearty and heavy, and they rang like pistol-shots.

Smack, smack, smack!

"Yow-ow-ow! Yaroooh! Oh, oh, oh! Oh!" roared Dicky.

His yells rang through the wood.

There was a rustling in the thickets, and a hurried footstep, and an angry voice shouted:

"Stop! Stop that, you bully!"

### NUGENT TAKES A HAND!

"YOU'RE coming, Franky?"

Bob Cherry asked that question

The Famous Five of Greyfriars were together that half-holiday as they generally were. Wharton and Bob Cherry, Johnny Bull and Hurree Singh, had wheeled their bicycles out of the shed; but Frank Nugent had left his machine on the stand.

Harry Wharton & Co. were looking very merry and bright that afternoon—with one exception. Frank Nugent's handsome face was rather overcast.

"Get your jigger, Frank," said Wharton.

"You're coming over to Cliff House."

"I—I think not," said Nugent.

"But the esteemed Marjorie is expecting all of us," remarked Hurree Jamsat Ram Singh. "Not to mention the elegant Clara and the beautiful Barbara."

Nugent smiled faintly.

"They won't miss me, if four of you go," he said. "The—fact is, I don't feel very bright this afternoon, and I won't inflict it on Marjorie & Co. You fellows get off!"

"But what are you going to do?" asked Wharton.

"I'll take a stroll round."

Johnny Bull gave a grunt.

"Rot!" he said.

"The rotfulness is terrific!"

"Better come, old nut," said Bob Cherry.

Frank Nugent shook his head.

"It's all right," he said. "Leave me out."

Ta-ta!"

"Rot!" repeated Johnny Bull, in his emphatic way. "Let the young rascal shift for himself!"

Nugent started, and coloured.

"I don't catch on——" he began.

"Rot! You're thinking about your precious minor, and you're going to muck up a half-holiday on his account!" said Johnny Bull angrily. "Think we haven't noticed it, you ass? Anybody'd think you were his kind uncle, the way you bother about him. Let him rip!"

"He's not your minor!" said Frank, rather tartly.

"Thank goodness for that!" said Johnny Bull.

"If he were my minor, I know what I'd do. I'd jolly well wallop him!"

Nugent's blue eyes glistened.

"That's enough," he said. "You fellows had better get off. I'm not coming."

"But, Frank, old chap——" began Wharton anxiously.

"I'm not coming, I tell you!"

With that, Nugent major turned and walked away, leaving his four chums standing by their bicycles. Johnny Bull gave another grunt, more emphatic than before.

"It's Dicky, I suppose," said Bob Cherry, after an uncomfortable pause.

"Of course it is," growled Johnny Bull.

"Some kind idiot of an uncle has sent the silly kid a big tip, and, of course, the young sweep is going to play the goat with it. Nugent found him with a sporting paper yesterday, going over the tips of some swindling race. He guessed from that that Master Dicky was kicking over

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the traces again. He took the paper away, and never said a word when the young rogue slanged him. I'd have licked him till he couldn't have slanged a canary."

"Poor old Franky!" murmured Bob. "He's got all his work cut out to look after that young monkey!"

"Why doesn't he lick him?" demanded Johnny Bull. "That's what he wants—a thundering good hiding! That's what I'd give him!"

"It's rather rotten for Frank to spend his half-holiday looking after that young sweep," said Harry Wharton.

"The rottenfulness is terrific!"

"Let's yank him over to Cliff House, whether he likes it or not!" suggested Johnny Bull.

"Bow-wow! Let's get off!" said Harry. "You're a bit too heavy-handed, Johnny, old man. Come on! Nugent doesn't want to be bothered now."

Johnny Bull gave another emphatic grunt, and the chums wheeled their bicycles out, and started. Frank Nugent, from the School House steps, watched them go, with a moody brow.

He would have liked to go to Cliff House—and he missed the company of his chums, too. But he was in a worried mood. When the spirit moved Master Dicky to kick over the traces, Frank felt that it was up to him to see that the fag came to no harm.

It was only too probable that, without a helping hand, Nugent minor might land himself in serious trouble—and a flogging from the Head was not a light matter. Frank was well aware what a flutter would be caused in the home circle if the news came that Master Dicky had been flogged for bad conduct. It was only too likely, too, that the blame would be laid on Frank for not having taken better care of the fag.

Nugent's affection for his young brother had often been put to a severe strain, but it had never failed.

He was wondering now where Dicky was. He knew that the fag had scuttled out of gates after dinner, but that was all.

"Hallo, old chap! Feeling down?"

Billy Bunter rolled up, and gave Frank Nugent a friendly blink.

"Oh, rats!" snapped Nugent.

He was not in his usual good temper.

Bunter blinked at him.

"Well, you needn't snap a fellow's head off," he remarked. "I was going to ask you to stop into the tuckshop and have a ginger. Mrs. Mimble has got in some fresh tarts, too."

"Have you seen my minor?"

"Yes, he went down towards Friardale," said Bunter. "I passed him turning into the wood. I say, don't walk away while a fellow's talking to you, Nugent. I say——" Bunter started in pursuit of Nugent major, who was making for the gates. "I say, Nugent, hold on a minute; it's important——"

Nugent paused, and looked back impatiently. "Well, what is it?" he snapped.

Bunter came up, panting.

"I say, I've been disappointed about a postal order——"

Frank Nugent did not wait for any more. He turned, and hurried out of the gates, leaving Billy Bunter blinking after him wrathfully.

"Beast!" murmured Bunter. "I shall have to find Mauleverer somehow. I believe Mauly is dodging me, the beast! They're all beasts!"

Frank Nugent walked rather quickly down the lane. The Co., on their bicycles, were long

out of sight. Where the footpath entered the wood, Nugent paused with a troubled brow; but he plunged into the wood at last, and, leaving the footpath, wandered among the trees.

He very much wanted to see Dicky, and yet he knew the angry resentment he had to expect from the fag at the bare thought of being "looked after." But there did not seem much chance of coming across Dicky Nugent. If the fag had had some shady object in leaving the school without his Second Form friends, Frank was not likely to discover him. He stopped at last, and rested against a gnarled trunk, wondering whether he had, after all, been making a mountain out of a molehill.

And then, suddenly, there came ringing through the trees the yells of an angry fag, to a sound of loud smacking, and Frank started. He knew his minor's angry voice.

He ran hurriedly through the trees towards the scene, and burst out into the footpath, his eyes blazing, shouting as he ran up.

### BLOW FOR BLOW!

"YOU rotter! Stop it!"

Drake's hand was raised for another smack.

But at the sight of Frank Nugent tearing up the footpath, with flaming face, he paused.

He had lost his temper, which was not surprising in the circumstances, but he was sorry enough that Frank Nugent had found him administering punishment to his minor.

"Rescue, Frank!" yelled Nugent minor, as he caught sight of his brother.

"I'm coming, Dicky!" panted Nugent.

Jack Drake released the fag.

Nugent was running straight at him, evidently with the intention of hitting out, without stopping to ask questions. It was enough for Frank that he had found Drake thrashing the fag.

Dicky squirmed away, gasping. His smacking had been severe, and he was hurt, and still more enraged than hurt.

Frank Nugent stood before his young brother, facing Drake, his fists clenched, his eyes ablaze.

"You rotten bully!" he panted. "How dare you touch my brother?"

"Here, draw it mild!" remonstrated Drake.

"Has he hurt you, Dicky?"

"Of course he has!" growled the fag. "Do you think a chap can be thumped like that without being hurt?"

"Put up your hands, Drake!"

"Look here, Nugent—"

"Don't you want to tackle a fellow as big as yourself?" shouted Nugent savagely. "Put up your hands, you coward!"

He advanced on Drake.

Dicky Nugent was grinning now.

"Good old Franky!" he said. "Go for him! Give him beans, old chap!"

At that moment Dicky was quite an affectionate minor. He would have given a term's pocket-money to see his major lick Jack Drake. He did not stop to reflect that he was probably giving Frank a task beyond his power. Frank was no weakling, and his pluck was unbounded; but he looked very slim and light beside the sturdy junior he was bent on attacking.

Drake backed away, flushing crimson.

"Look here, Nugent, I'm not going to fight you—"

"You'll take a licking if you don't!"

"Don't be a fool!" exclaimed Drake impatiently. "Let me explain—"

"There's nothing to explain. I found you bullying my minor, and that's enough."

"The precious young rascal—"

"That will do! Will you put up your hands?" exclaimed Nugent passionately.

"No, I won't!" snapped Drake, keeping his hands down. "I'm not going to fight you on account of that young sweep!"

He jumped back as Nugent struck at his face.

Frank's temper was at boiling point. He had suspected his minor of wrongdoing that afternoon, and he had found him—as he supposed—being bullied by a Remove fellow. Of Mr. Banks' late departure from the spot he knew nothing. He was remorseful for having suspected Dicky—and his remorse added to his anger against Drake. He followed Jack Drake up as he retreated.

"Nugent," shouted Rodney, "have a little sense! That young rascal—"

"Mind your own business!"

"Hands off, you fool!" shouted Drake, as Nugent struck at him again. "Well, if you will have it—"

He put up his hands in defence, and the next moment the two juniors were fighting furiously.

Dicky Nugent sat on a log to look on. Rodney watched the combat with a lowering brow.

He had no fear for his chum. Drake had defeated Bolsover major in a fight; and Bolsover major could have made rings round Nugent. But Rodney was bitterly chagrined to see his chum fighting a fellow he liked and respected, and all on account of a reckless young rascal like Dicky. There was no help for it now, however.

Nugent's passionate attack drove Drake back at first, and two or three marks showed on Drake's face, where fierce blows fell.

But in less than a minute Jack Drake recovered himself, and began to put his "beef" into the combat.

From that moment the fight went heavily against Nugent.

He was a good fighting-man for his weight, but he was no match for Jack Drake, who probably had no equal in the Remove, with the exception of Bob Cherry.

Drake was angry now, and he was pressing on; and Nugent found himself receiving severe punishment.

He fought gamely, not yielding an inch when he could help it, till a drive from the shoulder laid him on his back in the grass.

He fell with a crash, and lay dazed.

"Go it, Frank!" sang out Dicky.

He came to help his major up.

Drake dropped his hands, breathing hard.

"For goodness' sake, don't let this go any further!" exclaimed Rodney. "Nugent, do listen to me—"

Frank struggled to his feet, panting.

"I'm not finished yet. Come on, you cad!"

"Oh, chuck it!" said Drake impatiently.

"Can't you see you're beat? Don't be an ass."

Frank's answer was a breathless rush, and the fight recommenced.

It was fought to a finish this time.

In a couple of minutes, Frank Nugent fell on the grass, and when he strove to rise again he sank back helplessly. He was done.

"You rotter!" he muttered, staring up at Drake's flushed face. "I'll thrash you yet. I'll—"

He gasped breathlessly.

"I never wanted to fight you," said Drake



quietly. "I don't think you'd have wanted to fight me, if you'd have let me explain. That young rogue could tell you, if he liked—"

"Don't talk to me, you rotter!"

"I'll talk to you when you're cooler, then," said Drake; and he turned away.

Drake and Rodney walked quietly up the footpath. Drake was feeling the effects of the fight, though his punishment had been nothing, like Nugent's. He was feeling worried, too.

"You were right, old chap," he said. "It would have been better not to meddle with the young rascal. But who'd have supposed Nugent would bump in like that—like an unreasonable ass—"

Rodney shrugged his shoulders.

"He thinks no end of that young rascal of a brother of his," he said. "It's a standing joke. It's rotten that you should have fought with Nugent. It will mean trouble with Wharton's crowd."

"Oh, bother Wharton and his crowd," said Drake. "I'm not worrying about that. But it's rotten to hammer a chap who isn't one's match; but—but I couldn't help it, could I?"

"Of course you couldn't, old fellow."

"But it's rotten, all the same!" said Drake.

That afternoon's walk in the sunny woods was not, after all, a very happy one for the chums of the Remove.

#### AFTER THE FIGHT!

FRANK NUGENT sat in the grass, feeling dizzy and almost sick. One of his eyes was half-closed, and his nose was streaming red. He dabbed it feebly with his handkerchief. He had gone on long beyond his strength, and he was feeling utterly spent and "rotten."

His minor looked at him with some sympathy, but not without a hint of derision. He felt bound to linger, as Frank had been licked fighting in his cause; but he did not want to linger. He was anxious, in fact, to get into touch with Mr. Banks again, before that boozey gentleman disappeared into the precincts of the Bird-in-Hand.

"Feeling pretty bad?" he asked.

"Yes," groaned Frank. He staggered to his feet at last, and stood leaning heavily against a tree. "I—I did my best, Dicky."

"It wasn't much of a best, was it?" said Dicky. "Drake just made rings round you."

Nugent winced.

"You shouldn't have tackled him," pursued Dicky cheerfully. "Why, he licked Bolsover major. You hadn't an earthly, Frank."

"I did it for you."

"Well, you needn't have," said Dicky, perhaps feeling that this implied some claim on his gratitude. "I never asked you."

"You called to me—"

"Well, just to make him let go; I didn't mean you to fight him. Why, I knew you couldn't touch one side of him," said Dicky, with good-humoured contempt. "Anybody seeing you together would see that Drake could wallop you with one hand."

Nugent drew a deep, trembling breath.

"You needn't rub it in, Dicky," he said, in a low voice. "Anyhow, I stopped him bullying you."

"I dare say he'd about finished, anyhow."

"Oh! What was he pitching into you for, Dicky?"

"Because he's a meddling, interfering rotter!" said Dicky, with a fierce remembrance of his forcible separation from Mr. Joseph Banks. "Hang his cheek! I wish I could have licked him! Of course, you couldn't! I say, Frank, you'd better bathe your chivvy before you go home—you look a regular guy like that! You don't want me, I suppose?"

Without waiting to ascertain whether his brother wanted him or not, Nugent minor cut off through the trees.

Frank looked after him miserably, with a heavy heart and a dark brow. He would have been glad just then of some sign, however slight, of affection from his minor—some concern for him in his present painful condition. But Dicky was evidently thinking solely of his own concerns. Frank had to remember that the fag was the spoiled son of doting parents, to keep back the surge of bitterness that rose in his breast.

After all, it was not Dicky's fault; Dicky was all right. It wasn't Dicky's fault that Frank was feeling sick, and dizzy, and spent. That was the fault of Jack Drake, who had been bullying his minor. Nugent had long made it a rule never to feel resentment against his minor, whatever he did; had he broken that rule, it might have carried him too far. And for that reason his bitterness against Drake was all the sharper. There was something like hatred in his breast as he thought of the sturdy, careless fellow who had handled him so easily.

He limped wearily away from the spot, at last, to the little stream that sang musically through the heart of the wood. There he bathed his face, and the fresh cold water made him feel better. But the reaction had set in after the exertion and excitement, and he was feeling almost ill as he set out to trudge home through the scented woods. He was conscious, too, that there was a dark shade round his eye, and that his nose was red and swollen.

He came out of the wood into Friardale Lane, and trudged slowly and wearily towards Greyfriars in a black, bitter, and miserable mood. Whatever Dicky might be up to that afternoon, he had to be left to his own devices; Nugent was in no state to look after him further. That, too, was another item in his account against Jack Drake.

There was a sudden ringing of bicycle-bells behind the tired junior, and a well-known voice hailed him in stentorian tones.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!"

Nugent looked round.

Four cyclists came merrily along the dusty road, slackening down as they overtook Nugent. Harry Wharton & Co. were returning to the school, after tea at Cliff House. Wharton jumped off his machine. He had caught sight of Nugent's face as he looked round, and the state of it startled him.

"Frank, old chap, what's happened?"

"Nothing."

"You've been fighting—"

"I suppose you can see that," said Nugent bitterly. "I dare say I look a pretty sight."

"Was it the Highcliffe cads?" asked Bob Cherry, with a belligerent glance round the landscape.

"No."

"Frank, old chap—"

Wharton's face was full of concern.

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## PEN PALS COUPON 16-12-39

"Oh, don't worry!" said Nugent impatiently. "I suppose I can stand a licking, as well as any other chap."

"Was it a licking, then?"

"Yes," said Nugent, flushing scarlet.

"But who—"

"Drake, if you want to know."

Nugent started on again, his face bent, his eyes on the ground. There was no shame in a defeat by a superior force, but he felt a sense of shame.

The Co. exchanged uncomfortable glances, and followed him, wheeling their machines.

"Like to get on my jigger, Franky?" asked Bob Cherry, breaking a painful silence.

"No, thanks. You fellows ride on."

"Oh, we'll walk!"

"The walkfulness will be a pleasure," purred the Nabob of Bhanipur.

Nugent grunted.

It was not a happy party that arrived at the gates of Greyfriars.

Nugent hurried into the School House and up to Study No. 1. He was not anxious to show his disfigured face in public.

In a few minutes Harry Wharton came into the study. Wharton had the reputation of possessing a rather hasty temper, but he was very quiet and considerate now. He realised that Frank, in his present unusual mood, required treating with tact.

"Had your tea, old chap?" he asked.

"I don't want any!" answered Nugent curtly, from the depths of the study armchair.

"Better," said Harry. "I'll get it for you."

"You needn't trouble."

Wharton made no rejoinder to that, but he proceeded to get tea. Nugent found himself feeling better when he had had tea, too, and his sullen look faded away.

"Don't mind me, old fellow," he said, rather

shamefacedly. "I—I feel rather rotten—I don't mean to be ratty."

"All serene, old chap. It's odd you should have fallen out with Drake," said Harry. "He's generally a peaceable chap. Of course, I know it wasn't your fault."

"He was bullying my mirror," said Frank.

"Oh?"

Wharton uttered that ejaculation involuntarily, but there was a world of meaning in it. Frank Nugent crimsoned.

"Of course, you think it was Dicky that was to blame!" he exclaimed angrily.

"I—I didn't say so. I—" Wharton stammered a little.

"But you think so. You're down on Dicky, like all the rest." Nugent strode to the door.

"Think so, if you like—I don't care."

"Frank, old fellow—"

Slam!

Frank Nugent was gone. And Wharton, staring blankly at the shut door, gave a low whistle of dismay.

Next Week: "THE BOY WHO WOULDN'T FIGHT!"

## THE MILLION-DOLLAR SKATES!

(Continued from page 29.)

leave me. Why don't you make the ruffian desist?"

Placing his hands on the arms of the whizzing bathchair, Perkins got gingerly to his feet and began to straighten up so that he was facing Uncle Egbert across the top of Lady Mablethorpe's bonnet.

"Will you leave go this chair, you villain?" he bawled. "We'll have the law on you for this—Ow—"

A bullet from the gun of Bugs Moloney had whistled past Uncle Egbert's head and flicked the ear of Perkins as it passed on its way. So painful was that flick that Perkins collapsed on top of her ladyship, and the bathchair and its struggling occupants hurtled round a bend in the road, to whizz straight on into Puddlecombe village.

What the amazed and gaping villagers thought as the bathchair of Lady Mablethorpe flashed along the straggling village main street is difficult to say. Certainly they'd never seen anything like it in all their born days—and, as they said later, they were never likely to see anything like it again.

There was her ladyship and Perkins, a struggling heap in the bathchair, whilst propelling it along at breakneck speed was a wild-eyed, frenzied-looking gentleman on roller-skates.

On one side of Puddlecombe's village street a stream meanders its leisurely way. In winter the stream is often flooded, and in order that its waters will not overflow the road, a low stone parapet had been built along the side of the stream.

In summer-time the stream is at its lowest, and is a mere trickle of water between banks of thick, oozy mud. To this day Uncle Egbert swears that what happened wasn't his fault. He

says that either Perkins or her ladyship, or both of them, must somehow have kicked the bathchair handle. Be that as it may, the bathchair suddenly swerved violently from the road, and charged full tilt into the stone parapet which flanked the stream.

The parapet stopped the bathchair, of course; but it didn't stop Lady Mablethorpe and Perkins. As though propelled from a gun, they shot out of the bathchair, described a graceful parabola through the air, and landed with a yell and a sickening squelch in the black and oozy mud of the stream.

As for Uncle Egbert, when the bathchair had stopped so abruptly, his feet had shot away from under him before he could switch off the motors of the skates, and he had fallen flat on his back amongst the wreckage, a posture from which he was hauled to his feet by the village constable as Bugs Moloney and Gold-Tooth Charlie dashed up in their car.

"And that," said Goffin, drifting towards the door, "is what I meant when I said that in the whole history of roller skating there has never been such a remarkable exploit as that of my Uncle Egbert. Of course, everything was explained later, and Mrs. Wollerstein forgave him, but I don't think Lady Mablethorpe ever did. Well, s'long!"

The door closed gently on his retreating form.

"A peculiar story," said Dawson thoughtfully, picking up his ginger-beer. "I wonder what he did with the skates?"

Goffin inserted his head back into the tuck-shop.

"I forgot to mention," he said, "that old man Wollerstein bought the patent of those skates from Uncle Egbert, and made another million dollars out of 'em. Well, ta, ta!"

Next Wednesday: "THE FREAK WAGER!"

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