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CAUGHT OUT BY KERR!

A Magnificent New, Long, Complete School Tale of Tom Merry & Co.

WELL SAVED!

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A MAGNIFICENT NEW, LONG, COMPLETE SCHOOL STORY OF TOM MERRY & CO. AT ST JIM'S.

CAUGHT OUT BY KERR!

By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

CHAPTER 1.
Champion of the Oppressed.

"I WON'T!"

Redfern of St. Jim's gave a start as the defiant words rang out.

The New House junior was seated on a stile in Rylcombe Lane. He had been reading, but on hearing that shrill exclamation he closed his book and awaited developments.

Footsteps were audible in the roadway, but the hedge screened Reddy from view.

"I won't, I tell you!" continued the voice. "You're a pair of beastly bullies! And I won't carry your rotten parcel a step farther, so there!"

Redfern recognised the voice as belonging to Hobbs of the Third. He quietly descended from the stile, and peered round the corner of the hedge.

There were three fellows standing in the roadway. One was Hobbs; the other two were Racke and Crooke, of the Shell.

Hobbs was very dusty and dishevelled. He had apparently been commandeered by the two Shell fellows to carry a large parcel up from the station. The fag had yielded under pressure; though it was very doubtful if Wally D'Arcy or Frank Levison would have done the same in the circumstances. They would probably have told Racke and Crooke in plain language what they thought of them.

But Hobbs had his limit, and he had reached it now. That parcel was no light weight; and the fag, having dumped it down in the roadway, waited defiantly for his aggressors to make the next move.

"You cheeky young cub!" snarled Racke. "Why, you haven't carried the dashed thing a hundred yards! Get a move on!"

"You can go and eat coke!" said Hobbs, his voice rising to a shrill treble. "I don't fag for the Shell!"

"Cheeky infants who defy us," said Crooke, "are liable to get badly bumped!"

"I don't care!" said Hobbs, clenching his fists. "All I know is, I'm not fagging for you! You can bully me as much as you like, but I sha'n't handle that parcel again!"

"Then we'll handle you!" growled Racke. "There's a nice, green, slimy pond on the other side of the hedge. If you don't choose to carry that parcel up to St. Jim's, we'll bump you first, an' then give you a jolly good ducking!"

Hobbs glanced round wildly, as if seeking a way of escape. But he realised, with a sinking heart, that the cads of the Shell, even though out of condition, could easily overtake him. He decided to stand fast and make a fight of it.

"You hear me?" said Racke menacingly.

"Yes, you cad!"

"And you refuse to obey your betters?"

"I'll see you hanged first!"

Racke signed to Crooke, and the pair of them assailed Hobbs.

"Oh, you rotters!" panted the Third-Former. "You're two to one! Why can't you play fair?"

And then, as Racke and Crooke closed in upon him, Hobbs shouted with the full force of his lungs:

"Help! Rescue!"

There was a swift patter of feet, and Racke and Crooke paused in their attack, and spun round. Redfern of the New House confronted them, with clenched fists and blazing eyes.

"You utter cads!" he shouted. "You deserve a thundering good licking for this, both of you—and what's more, you're going to get it!"

"Mind your own bizney!" said Crooke sullenly; but he winced at the grim expression on Redfern's face.

"We—we weren't hurting the kid!" stammered Racke. "We just meant to frighten him!"

"That's a lie! You threatened to bump him, and then duck him in the pond! You can try the same game on me, if you like; but I don't think you'll get very far. Take that!"

And Redfern sailed in with an uppercut which lifted Aubrey Racke off his feet.

No sooner had Reddy delivered the blow than Crooke rushed in and attempted to trip him up.

Redfern staggered; but, recovering himself, he shot out his left, straight from the shoulder.

"Yaroooooh!" yelled Crooke.

Reddy's knuckles had crashed upon Crooke's nose, and the Shell fellow went down like a ninepin.

At this stage Racke scrambled to his feet, and was about to slink away from the danger-zone, but Redfern intercepted him.

Redfern was one of the most even-tempered fellows at St. Jim's; but the sight of bullying always roused his anger. And he was very angry now.

Again his left shot out, and Aubrey Racke sat down heavily in the roadway, blinking dazedly about him with his one sound eye.

"Get up and have some more!" roared Redfern.

Racke declined the invitation. As for Crooke, that terrific punch on the nose had knocked all the fight out of him.

"You are rotten cowards!" said Redfern contemptuously "Worms like you deserve to be kicked out of St. Jim's!"

He turned to young Hobbs, who had been surveying the conflict with wide and admiring eyes.

"You can cut, kid!" he said kindly. "If these rotters lay their paws on you again, just let me know!"

Hobbs nodded gratefully, and scurried away to St. Jim's, to tell his chums in the Third of the afternoon's adventure.

Racke and Crooke still lay sprawled in the roadway. They imagined that if they regained their feet they would only be knocked down again. There was a glint in Redfern's eye which spelt danger.

"I'd a jolly good mind to duck you in the pond!" said Reddy. "But you're slimy enough already, to my thinking. Ta-ta!"

And Dick Redfern went.

Reluctantly Racke and Crooke rose to their feet, and took up the weighty parcel.

They were not much in the way of carrying parcels, and their progress was slow and awkward.

By the time the gates of St. Jim's were reached they presented rather a woeful appearance. Both were perspiring freely; one of Racke's eyes had put up the shutter, so to speak, and Crooke's nose was decidedly bulbous.

"My hat! What's all this?" exclaimed Tom Merry, who was standing in the gateway with Manners and Lowther. Dick Redfern had come up a minute or two later.

"Oh, Mary, come and call the cattle home!" sang Monty Lowther softly.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Healthy exercise for seedy slackers," said Redfern, with a grin. "They'd bagged a fag for the job; but I thought it was up to them to do the Pickford bizney themselves."

"Difference of opinion first, wasn't there?" asked Tom, with a glance at their battered faces.

"Well, a little one," answered Redfern.

Racke and Crooke staggered upstairs, dumped their burden down in the study, and sank into different chairs, utterly exhausted.

But there was an evil glint in the undamaged eye of Aubrey Racke which boded ill for Redfern of the New House!

CHAPTER 2.
At Whose Door?

"HALLO!"

Tom Merry stopped short in the doorway of his study—No. 10 on the Shell passage.

Manners and Lowther stopped short, too, wondering what had given rise to that sudden exclamation on their chum's part.

"What is it, O King?" asked Monty Lowther. "Somebody raiding our jam?"

Tom Merry advanced into the study, and picked up the object which had arrested his attention. It was a copy of a magazine, much about the same size as "Tom Merry's Weekly," but with a drawing on the cover which was by an unfamiliar hand. The title, too, was foreign to the juniors. It was the "Hornet."

"My hat!" exclaimed Manners. "Somebody's started a new rag, by the look of it. Another rival of our merry old 'Weekly'—what?"

"Who is the fatheaded duffer on the cover?" asked Monty Lowther.

Tom Merry glanced at the drawing and flushed.

"It's intended to be me, I think," he said quietly.

The illustration depicted an anæmic-looking youth with a thick muffler drawn tightly about his neck. He was gazing fondly into a big hamper containing socks, mittens, and an array of medicine-bottles. And underneath was written:

"With love from Aunt Priscilla!"

Tom Merry turned over the cover rather hastily, and began to survey the contents of the "Hornet." Manners and Lowther, keenly interested, glanced over his shoulder.

"By jove!" said Manners. "The Shell seems to be getting it in the neck. Here's a poem about old Grundy, and a drawing of you, Monty, camouflaged to look like a monkey——"

"Where?" hooted Lowther.

"Just beneath the editorial. Don't you recognise yourself? 'Up the pole, as usual.' Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blessed if I can see why you should cackle like an old, broody hen!" growled Monty Lowther. "Who is responsible for that apology for a sketch, anyway?"

"There are no initials to it," said Tom Merry. "The whole thing's jolly mysterious. The editor doesn't give his name, and none of the contributors do, for that matter. Someone's trying to take a rise out of the Shell."

"Likewise the Fourth," said Manners. "Somebody's had the brazen cheek to draw a cartoon of the great Gussy! This will get his noble back up."

"You are quite wight, Mannahs! I am extwemely annoyed at this dispawagin' wepwesentation of me. It has outwaged my dignity."

The Terrible Three turned as Arthur Augustus advanced into the study, flourishing a copy of the "Hornet." Behind him came Jack Blake and Herries and Digby. All were looking indignant. The Fourth, as well as the Shell, had been mercilessly lashed by the unknown contributors.

"I'm on Gussy's side about this," said Jack Blake. "It's too thick altogether. Who is responsible for this rag?"

"Echo answers 'Who?'" said Monty Lowther.

"They've thrown mud at my cornet-playing!" snorted Herries.

"That's the one redeeming feature of the issue, then," said Monty Lowther. "There are a good many divided opinions at St. Jim's, but everybody agrees about your cornet-playing—it's worse than the Seven Plagues of Egypt!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I shall demand the instant suppwession of this howwid wag!" said Arthur Augustus heatedly. "Some of you fellows have made funnay wemarks about me in 'Tom Mewwy's Weekly'; but this is wotten libel!"

"Hear, hear!"

There was a shuffling of feet in the passage, and Grundy came in, with Wilkins and Gunn behind him.

There was a pained look on the countenance of George Alfred Grundy. He, too, carried a copy of the "Hornet."

"Look here, Merry!" he said, in his imperious way. "What are you going to do about this? If you don't ferret out the editor of this—this confounded trash, and give him the bumping he deserves, I'll do it off my own bat! I can take a joke as well as anybody, but this is beyond the limit! Look!"

And the outraged Grundy pointed to a set of verses about himself.

"A swaggering fool, a pompous ass,
A clumsy clown as well;
Stand back, ye freaks! Your King doth pass—
'Tis Grundy of the Shell!"

That was the first verse. The poetry was not good; it certainly was not complimentary. And the other verses were so unflattering that Grundy, when he first read them, had quite frightened Wilkins and Gunn by stamping up and down his study like a caged beast.

"Something's got to be done about it!" said Grundy. "It's not cricket to attack a fellow anonymously like this! Anyway, we can find out who printed the beastly paper, and go and slaughter him!"

"Afwaid not, deah boy," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "The first thing I looked for was the name of the pwintah, but I dwew blank."

"That's so," said Jack Blake. "Whoever produced this rotten rag was careful to cover up his tracks. There's not a single clue to go by that I can see."

"This is the sort of game that Racke might be expected to play," said Manners. "It wouldn't be the first time he'd done this sort of thing."

Tom Merry shook his head.

"I shouldn't think Racke had a hand in this," he said. "There's an article near the end running him down."

"May be only a blind," said Manners. "Racke's jolly deep, you know!"

"If you ask me," said Digby, "I should say it was a New House stunt."

"Why?" exclaimed several voices.

"Because there isn't a word about the New House from cover to cover. The insults are against the School House every time. That looks jolly suspicious!"

"Well, whoever the rotters are," said Grundy, crumpling the paper savagely in his large hand, "they're booked for a warm time. I'm not going to have my name taken in vain like this!"

Levison major, Cardew, and Clive looked into the already crowded study. Ralph Reckness Cardew was smiling imperturbably, but the faces of his study-mates were grim. Copies of the "Hornet" seemed to have been circulated broadcast. And one of them had evidently found its way to Study No. 9 on the Fourth Form passage.

"What do you fellows make of this?" asked Clive, holding out a copy of the infamous journal.

"We're thirsting for the editor's gore!" said Monty Lowther. "Nobody seems to know who is at the bottom of the bizney. It needs a detective to solve the mystery."

"In that case, you needn't look further than me," said Grundy. "I'm going to thrash this matter out!"

"Good old Herlock Sholmes!" drawled Cardew approvingly. "I s'pose you'll go round punchin' everybody on the nose first, an' then asking them if they had anythin' to do with the 'Hornet'?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Before Grundy could reply, Racke and Crooke made themselves audible in the passage. Both seemed to be very indignant.

"Railton ought to know about this," Racke was saying. "It's a low-down trick, to attack a fellow in an anonymous article!"

"You look as if you've been attacked in a more direct way, too!" grinned Monty Lowther. "Who presented you with that black eye, Racke?"

"Mind your own bizney!" growled Racke, thrusting his way into the study with Crooke. "What I want to know is, who is publishing these libels?"

"It's hardly your place to play the injured innocent," said Tom Merry. "You're not above this sort of thing yourself."

"I'm going to get on the track of the cads who are responsible for this, anyway!" muttered Racke. "An' I don't think I shall have to look further than the New House."

"What?"

Tom Merry set very little store by Racke's words, as a rule; but it was curious that the cad of the Shell should have echoed the suspicion which Dig had put into words a few moments before.

"Why not go over and tackle Figgins & Co.?" suggested Levison.

"I feah that would be a wathah useless pwoceedin'," said Arthur Augustus. "Figgay is much too decent a fellow to stwike in the dark like this. If he wanted to slang us he'd do it openly."

"Hear, hear!" said Manners. "If Figgy & Co. wanted to score over us they wouldn't be afraid to put their names to this paper. Neither would Redfern & Co., for that matter."

"Then this must be the work of some of the rotters in the New House," said Digby. "I'm convinced the New House are in it."

"Br-r-r!" growled Grundy. "You fellows can jaw about it as long as you like. Jawing isn't going to ferret out the giddy culprit. It's action that's wanted here!"

And Grundy departed—no doubt to take action.

After a good deal of fruitless speculation as to the identity of the criminals, the assembly in Tom Merry's study dispersed. As they trooped along the passage they encountered other fellows who had received copies of the "Hornet." Talbot and Harry Noble, Dane and Bernard Glyn, Roylance and Dick Julian, had all received copies of the rag. Some of the fellows who had not been singled out individually as objects of attack were inclined to treat the affair as a joke; but the majority were indignant, and the editorial staff of the "Hornet" looked like having a very warm time of it when they were found.

But would they ever be found?

That, as Monty Lowther said, was the question!

CHAPTER 3.

Racke's Resolve.

"ARE you ready?" asked Racke.

"Eh?"

Crooke of the Shell raised his eyebrows. He was reclining on the couch in Racke's study with a cigarette between his lips, and he was feeling drowsy and disinclined for action. He looked up in some alarm as Racke rose to his feet.

"What's the little game?" he inquired.

"We're goin' to see our worthy an' respected House make rings round the New House."

Crooke stared. Aubrey Racke as a football enthusiast was something quite new.

"Come along!" said Racke briskly. "Let's cheer the cripples on to victory!"

"Not for a pension!" said Crooke, without stirring. "I'm quite comfy here, thanks!"

Racke stepped over to the couch and jerked his astonished study-mate to his feet.

"What in thunder——" began Crooke.

"We're on in this act," said Racke. "And it's something more than a walking-on part, too. Have you forgotten that smashin' punch on the nose that Redfern gave you?"

"No!" growled Crooke, taking out his handkerchief and dabbing at the organ in question.

"An' I haven't forgotten that he gave me a black eye!" said Racke grimly. "Redfern's an interferin' hound! And you and I, instead of sittin' here nursin' our injuries, are goin' to get our own back."

"You're not going to start scrapping?" said Crooke anxiously. He had no stomach for further fighting.

"No," said Racke. "I'm merely goin' to do a little sleight-of-hand trick, that's all."

Racke unlocked a drawer as he spoke, took out a bundle of proofs, and thrust them into his pocket.

"What have you got there?" asked Crooke, beginning to be interested.

"The printer's proofs of the next number of the "Hornet.'"

"And what have they got to do with Redfern?"

"Lots! They'll get him into such a mess that he'll be dashed sorry he ever interfered with us."

Crooke began to see daylight.

"You are going to wangle those proofs into Redfern's pocket?" he exclaimed.

"Precisely!"

"But how?"

"It will be as easy as fallin' off a form. When the House match gets to an excitin' pitch, an' the fellows have no eyes for anything else, I'll pop into the pavilion and slip these proofs into Redfern's coat-pocket. Easily done—what?"

"My hat!" said Crooke rather breathlessly. "That's not a bad stunt. When the fellows see Redfern with the proofs they'll pounce on him right away as being the editor of the 'Hornet.'"

Racke nodded.

"I shall put the things in his pocket so that they stick out, and everybody can see them," he said. "There's sure to be a crowd in the pavilion after the match, an' he'll be caught red-handed!"

"Rippin'!" said Crooke.

"I've seen Clampe of the New House," pursued Racke. "I've arranged with him to throw out some dark hints to help in downin' Redfern."

"Good!"

The black sheep of the Shell were very keen to get even with Redfern. There was already a hue-and-cry for the person or persons responsible for the "Hornet," and the discovery of the proofs in Redfern's possession would certainly make things look very black against him. Reddy would hotly deny any allegations, of course; but few would believe him in the face of such evidence. Racke and Crooke were chuckling as they left the study.

Quite a crowd of juniors were making their way to the football-ground. The House match always produced a keen tussle, and Tom Merry had selected the strongest side he could muster.

Some fellows were disappointed with the selection. No junior eleven had yet been formed which met with unanimous approval.

Grundy of the Shell was convinced that the School House would be in a bad way without his services. He had solemnly warned Tom Merry what to expect if he—George Alfred Grundy—were left out. The captain of the Shell had replied that he was willing to chance it.

But Grundy had no intention of wasting the afternoon. His mind was still occupied with the mystery of the "Hornet," and he meant to lose no time in setting to work. Wilkins and Gunn found their leader very thoughtful as the trio made their way to the football-ground.

"I hope to pick up a clue this afternoon," said Grundy impressively.

Wilkins grunted. Gunn remarked that he hoped the weather would keep fine.

"I rather like these detective stunts," Grundy went on. "Of course, not every chap is fitted for a job like this. It needs a fellow with a quick eye and lots of resource."

"Then I should advise you to keep off the grass," said Wilkins.

"Eh?"

"You'll only go putting your foot in it," said Gunn. "You may fancy yourself as a second edition of Sexton Blake, old man, but you're not!"

Grundy glared.

"I don't want any of your cheek!" he said hotly. "You're only jealous of my superior reasoning powers."

"We can't be jealous of you for something you haven't got!" said Wilkins.

"Why, you — you——" stuttered Grundy. "I'd a jolly good mind to wade in and slaughter the pair of you!"

"Bow-wow!"

Grundy clenched his massive fists; and Wilkins and Gunn, noting the storm-signals on his brow, promptly stepped out of range. Grundy the fighting-man was a great deal more imposing than Grundy the detective.

Fortunately for Wilkins and Gunn, a diversion occurred at that moment. Figgins & Co. of the New House were arriving on the ground. They were singing as they came. And the burden of their song was as follows:

"Down with the School House swankers!
Down with the School House shams!
Down with the fussy and elegant Gussy,
And Merry's little lambs!
On the ball! On the ball!
Down with the beggars, one and all!"

The School House fellows recognised that verse. It came from the "Hornet," which clearly showed that the objectionable periodical had found its way into the New House.

"This is too thick!" exclaimed Tom Merry, flushing. "They might reserve this sort of thing until after the match!"

"Hark at the beauties!" said Monty Lowther. "I can detect Figgy's screech above the rest!"

Manners made a megaphone of his hands, and turned to the advancing singers.

"Dry up!" he roared.

"Yaas, wathah! Dwy up, you wottahs!" shrilled Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "That wefewence to me is most wepwehensible! I insist——"

"Down with the fussy and elegant Gussy,
And Merry's little lambs!"

roared the New House fellows in unison.

"Weally, Figgay! If you persist in this wibaldwy, I shall be compelled to ask you to put up your hands!" exclaimed the indignant swell of St. Jim's.

But the refrain had caught on in the New House, and the singing went on unchecked. It looked very much as though the football match would be scratched in favour of a free fight, when Lefevre of the Fifth, who was acting as referee, shouted for order.

After a final burst of song at the expense of their rivals, the New House fellows lined up.

"It's pretty obvious now," said Jack Blake, "that the 'Hornet' is being run by the New House."

"I'm beginning to think so myself," said Tom Merry. "We shall have to get at the bottom of this bizney afterwards. Meanwhile, it's up to us to prove that we're still the cock house of St. Jim's."

"Hear, hear!"

Lefevre blew his whistle, and the next moment School House and New House were engaged in a ding-dong tussle.

CHAPTER 4.
Grundy's Capture.

"A CLUE!"

The voice of George Alfred Grundy quivered with excitement.

Wilkins and Gunn were excited, too—not because of any clue, real or imaginary, on Grundy's part, but because the School House forwards were racing down the field in line, carrying all before them.

"A real live clue!" said Grundy. "What do you make of that, you fellows?"

"Topping!" said Wilkins. "Good old Gussy! Run it through! Shoot!"

"I've got a clue, I tell you!" howled Grundy.

"Shoot!" roared Gunn. "Oh, hard lines, Gussy!"

The swell of St. Jim's had sent the ball just wide of the post.

"Never mind," said Wilkins. "Our fellows are shaping well. Fatty Wynn's dancing about like a cat on hot bricks. They won't give him a minute's peace. There they go again! Bravo, Tom Merry! Buzz it in! Yaroooooh!"

Wilkins broke off with a yell of anguish. Grundy had seized him by the collar, and was shaking him like a rat.

"You drivelling idiot!" roared Grundy. "Can't you listen?"

"Yow! Leggo!" gasped Wilkins. "Dragimoff, Gunn! He's dangerous!"

Grundy shook the squirming Wilkins until the latter was scant of breath; then, with a snort, he released him.

"If you value a potty footer match more than my detective work, you can go ahead!" said Grundy scornfully. "I told you I'd got a clue, and you start raving like prize lunatics! I'm fed up with the pair of you!"

"That's just how we feel about you!" said Gunn.

"W-w-what?" gasped Grundy.

"You can go and eat coke!" said Wilkins. "Whenever you start meddling with things you mess up the whole show!"

"But I tell you I've practically run my quarry to earth——"

"Rats!"

"Look here, George Wilkins——"

"No, thanks! Have pity on my eyesight!"

With a snort of rage, Grundy doubled his fists and rushed at Wilkins. But the latter had no wish to come to grips with Grundy just then. He promptly vanished into the crowd, followed by Gunn.

"I can't stick old Grundy when he gets like this!" panted Wilkins, when they were out of harm's way. "I bet he's got somebody under observation who had nothing at all to do with the 'Hornet.'"

"Yes, rather!" said Gunn. "He'll make himself the laughing-stock of St. Jim's. But never mind Grundy now. Look at old Gussy putting the pace on!"

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy had taken a pass from Jack Blake, and was away like a hare. On and on he went, swerving past Figgins and Kerr, until he came within shooting distance.

Fatty Wynn, watchful and alert in the New House goal, fisted out the cross-shot which Gussy sent whizzing in; but Tom Merry was well to the fore. He met the ball on the rebound, and crashed it into the corner of the net before the Falstaff of St. Jim's could get to it.

"Goal!"

"One up for the School House!" said Wilkins, with satisfaction.

"About time, too," said Gunn. "They've been bombarding Fatty Wynn for the last ten minutes. Hallo! Racke's down here watching the match. And Crooke, too! What idiot said the age of miracles was past?"

Wilkins snorted.

"I expect they've got money on the game," he said. "They wouldn't watch it for sheer love of the thing. They're up to some shady dodge or other, you bet. "Oh, I say!" The voice of George Wilkins trailed off dismally as Redfern, cleverly eluding the School House backs, sent in a scorching shot, beat Herries, and brought the scores level.

The House match was certainly coming well up to expectations. The School House did the lion's share of the attacking; but in the New House rearguard Figgins and Kerr worked untiringly, and

Fatty Wynn justified his reputation of being the best junior custodian at St. Jim's. The School House forwards—among whom Tom Merry and Talbot were ever conspicuous—gave the fat junior many hot handfuls; but Fatty Wynn kept his citadel intact, and half-time arrived with the score one all.

Racke and Crooke had not, thus far, had a chance to put their rascally scheme into operation. The entrance to the pavilion had been guarded—unintentionally, of course—by Baggy Trimble, who sat on the steps stuffing himself with caramels from a large bag.

Knowing Baggy's suspicious nature, the cads of the Shell had not ventured to approach the pavilion; and the proofs of the next number of the "Hornet" still reposed in Racke's pocket. But the plotters did not worry. They had no doubt that an opportunity would arise during the second half whereby they might carry out their scheme.

"Topping game, so far," remarked Tom Merry to Figgins, as the players stood aside to rest. "We mean to make shavings of you next half, though, to get even for the beastly din you kicked up before the match started."

"Yaas, wathah!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "You had no wight to make use of such a vulgah song!"

"As for downing the School House, you'll find you've a long, long way to go before that happens!" said Jack Blake warmly.

Figgins grinned.

"We shall see," he said. "But, speaking of the 'Hornet,' it's a pretty good production—what?"

"You wouldn't say so if it slated the New House!" said Tom Merry. "By the way, how did you fellows come to get hold of it?"

"Copies were strewn about the New House like leaves in Vallombrosa," said Kerr. "It's a wonder old Ratty didn't get hold of one. He'd have suppressed it like a shot if he had seen it."

"That would be rather difficult," said Talbot, "considering nobody knows who is responsible for the trash."

"Trash!" echoed Fatty Wynn. "It's a rattling good magazine, in my opinion. I hope it has a long innings. It knocks your silly old 'Weekly' into a cocked hat!"

"Why, you fat chump——" began Monty Lowther indignantly.

Matters looked like warming up again, when suddenly a great commotion arose, and George Alfred Grundy strode up to the group of footballers. Skimpole of the Shell, owing to circumstances over which he had no control, accompanied Grundy. The amateur detective was breathing hard.

"I've got him!" he announced triumphantly.

"Got whom?" exclaimed Tom Merry.

"The editor of the 'Hornet!'"

"What?" yelled the junior incredulously.

"The sporting editor, anyway," said Grundy defiantly. "I caught him in the very act! There's one in the eye for you, Kerr! You'll have to admit, after this, that you are not the only fellow at St. Jim's who can fathom giddy mysteries!"

"But Skimmy——" gasped Kerr.

"Really, my dear fellows," said Skimpole, blinking round at the astonished juniors, "I must protest against this violent and tyrannical treatment! I assure you that I have no connection whatever with that defamatory and pernicious periodical the 'Hornet.' My sympathies shall never degenerate into such a vortex of offensive calumny. If Grundy persists in this unprecedented hooliganism I shall have no recourse but to thrash him!"

Getting Rid of Baggy.
(See Chapter 5.)

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Grundy, you ass," said Tom Merry, laughing, "let go of Skimmy at once! It's absurd to say he's the sporting editor of the 'Hornet.' In the first place, he knows nothing about sport; and secondly, the only literary stunts he ever aspires to are the brain-waves of Professor Balmycrumpet."

Grundy was pink with rage.

"I tell you I caught him red-handed!" he said furiously. "He was sitting on a camp-stool, behind the New House goal, and he was scribbling away for dear life! I'm positive he was writing a report of the match, and poking fun at the School House! When I asked him what he was writing, he slipped the paper and fountain-pen into his pocket. That's clear proof!"

"I strongly repudiate any asseverations emanating from this—this irresponsible numskull!" said Skimpole severely.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"But I distinctly saw the name 'Clive' on your paper!" hooted Grundy. "You can't deny it!"

"I certainly do not deny having inscribed the cognomen in question," said Skimpole.

"Ah! You are beginning to cave in, are you?" said Grundy. "Perhaps you'll make him hand over the paper, Merry? I didn't take it from him myself, because I wanted you fellows to act as witnesses."

"All serene!" said Tom Merry good-humouredly. "Hand over the merry paper, Skimmy!"

The genius of the Shell, having been duly released by Grundy, obeyed.

The juniors crowded round to see the document. It was a foolscap sheet, on which the following sentence had been faithfully copied out fifty times:

"Clive was a great English statesman."

"What on earth——" began Tom Merry.

Skimpole explained the situation.

"Mr. Linton gave me fifty lines this morning," he said mildly.

"Oh, my hat!"

Grundy's face was a study. After putting forth all his deductive powers—after keeping strict watch and ward on Skimpole since the match started—he discovered that he had struck a false scent! And the discovery was not lightened by the roar of laughter which went up from the crowd of onlookers.

"Grundy, old man," sobbed Monty Lowther, "they'll never take you on at Scotland Yard—not even as a commissionaire! If I were you I should chuck detective work and start keeping rabbits!"

"Yaas, bai Jove! I wegard you as a fwabjous ass, Gwunday!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "I considah——"

At that moment Lefevre of the Fifth blew his whistle for the game to be resumed; and George Alfred Grundy, with yet another failure added to his record, was only too glad to crawl away to a quiet corner and hide his diminished head.

CHAPTER 5.
A Startling Discovery.

"GOAL!"

"Jolly well played, Redfern!"

The House match had scarcely been resumed five minutes when Redfern, snapping up a clever pass from his chum Lawrence, scored with a fast, rising shot, and put the New House on top.

"That's the style!" shouted Figgins approvingly. "Keep it up, New House!"

But Tom Merry & Co. had no intention of letting their opponents leave them standing. The School House bucked up, fighting hard for an equalising goal.

Fatty Wynn proved a great stumbling-block. It had to be a good shot indeed to deceive the Falstaff of St. Jim's. His

keen eye and ever-ready fist saved the situation time and again.

The School House, attacking strongly, swarmed like bees round their opponents' goal. Tom Merry shot hard at point-blank range, and Fatty Wynn bounced up like a plump Jack-in-the-box and fisted out the ball. Then Talbot shot, but struck the upright; and Jack Blake relieved the situation for the New House by sending the ball just over the cross-bar.

Play was transferred into mid-field again, but not for long. Away went Arthur Augustus on the wing, with a fine turn of speed.

"Pass, Gussy!"

Talbot was unmarked on the other wing. Arthur Augustus swung the ball across, and Talbot darted forward and whipped it into the net, Fatty Wynn having no possible chance to save.

"Good man!" panted Tom Merry, as he trotted back to the centre of the field with Talbot. "That's levelled things up, anyway. Now for the winning goal!"

The game became very fast after this. Each House played up desperately for the goal that would probably decide the issue.

Racke and Crooke, standing with the crowd on the touchline, saw that all eyes were now directed upon the game, which had about twenty minutes to run.

"Time we got a move on," said Racke, tapping the pocket containing the proofs.

For a moment Crooke wavered. His nerve was not equal to that of Aubrey Racke.

"Do you think it's quite safe?" he said doubtfully.

"Of course!" said Racke. "Not funkin' it, are you?"

"Nunno!" said Crooke hastily.

Racke glanced towards the pavilion, and frowned. Baggy Trimble still sat on the steps, regarding an empty bag with a dissatisfied scowl.

"Hang that fat idiot!" snapped Racke. "He's always in the way. We shall have to entice him away from the place somehow. Come on!"

Baggy Trimble looked up as Racke and Crooke approached.

"Lucky dog, Baggy!" said Racke amiably.

The fat junior stared.

"W-w-what do you mean?" he exclaimed.

"I say again, lucky dog!" said Racke cheerfully. "It isn't every fellow who receives whacking great hampers in war-time——"

Baggy Trimble was on his feet in a twinkling.

"Oh, really, Racke! You don't mean to say that a hamper's arrived for me?"

"Yes, rather! We saw Taggles carrying it across the quad just now. It was the dickens of a weight. Nearly bent poor old Taggles double. Here, I say——"

But Baggy Trimble was away like the wind. His fat little legs were going like clockwork. The prospect of a huge hamper was like balm in Gilead to him just then. He could not for the life of him conceive who had sent him the hamper. It was possibly addressed to him in error. But that would make no difference to the unscrupulous Baggy. He would get busy on the contents of that hamper, and not worry about its ownership. Not for one moment did he suppose that Racke had been pulling his leg.

"The coast is clear now!" muttered Racke to his accomplice. "Stay here a jiffy, an' keep your dashed eyes open! Cough if anybody's comin'!"

Crooke nodded, and Racke, after a swift glance round, darted up the steps and into the pavilion.

A moment later he emerged, grinning with satisfaction.

"All serene!" he said. "The proofs show up nicely in the pocket of Redfern's blazer. Now, we'd better make ourselves scarce. Clampe will be knockin' around to put the finishin' 'touches to the evidence against Redfern. I must say Clampe has come in jolly useful over this bizney. I got him to forge Redfern's handwritin' on some of the sheets."

Crooke was not feeling very chirpy. He had played tricks like this before, and they had invariably recoiled on his own head. However black the case against Redfern might appear, there were certain to be a few of his special chums who would stoutly maintain his innocence.

The two rascals left the football-ground at a time when the match had reached a most exciting stage. The teams were playing hammer-and-tongs now, each side bent upon scoring the deciding goal.

Once the School House forwards broke away, and Fatty Wynn had an anxious five minutes. He fisted away a corner-kick nicely placed by Gussy, and then the New House took up the running. Their halves ran the ball up the field by clever passing, and Lawrence, snapping up a pass, worked himself into position.

"Shoot!" howled the New House supporters as one man.

Lawrence kicked hard for goal, but the ball was fisted out. Before the backs could clear, however, Redfern dashed up, apparently from nowhere, and scored with a great shot.

"Three to two!" chortled Figgins. "Hurrah!"

"Well played, Reddy!" exclaimed Lawrence and Owen, rushing up and thumping their chum on the back.

Redfern had certainly done well. He had kicked all three goals for the New House, and had shown fine judgment throughout.

During the interval that remained the School House tried all they knew to save the game. They scarcely deserved to be behind on the run of the play, and their final efforts kept the crowd in a state of breathless suspense.

Had Fatty Wynn lost his head the School House would have achieved their object. But the plump junior was as cool as a cucumber. He saved one situation after another, and when Lefevre blew his whistle for the last time Fatty Wynn was still unbeaten.

The New House, thanks largely to Redfern, had defeated their good friends and keen rivals by three goals to two.

"Down with the School House swankers!
Down with the School House shams!"

commenced one of the victorious players; but Figgins instantly suppressed the outburst. It was scarcely playing the game, he considered, to continue to crow over Tom Merry & Co. in the hour of their defeat.

The School House fellows took their licking with smiling faces. They were confident that their revenge would come later.

Clampe of the New House joined the players as they trooped into the pavilion.

"Rippin' good game!" he remarked.

Monty Lowther viewed the speaker with extreme disfavour.

"You don't mean to say you've actually been watching a footer-match!" he exclaimed, with crushing sarcasm. "Was there no race-meeting this afternoon?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Don't be a funny ass!" growled Clampe. "I'm as keen on footer as anybody. Redfern played a topping game, didn't he? I expect we shall hear all about it in the next number of the 'Hornet.'"

"What do you mean, you cad?" exclaimed Redfern, overhearing the remark.

"Ain't you the editor of the 'Hornet,' then?" asked Clampe innocently.

Redfern flushed crimson at the insinuation, and advanced swiftly towards Clampe. Then he changed his mind, and turned aside into the pavilion.

"Rotters like you aren't worth scrapping with!" he said.

"We'll give him a jolly good bumping, if you like!" said Lawrence liberally.

"No; let the crawling worm alone!" Reddy replied.

The footballers proceeded to put on their coats. Redfern was about to detach his from the peg when he caught sight of some papers protruding from one of the pockets. Figgins saw them at the same time, and was the first to comment on the fact.

"Somebody given you a dose of lines, old chap?" he asked.

Redfern did not reply. Feeling considerably puzzled, he was about to examine the papers, when Manners uttered a sharp ejaculation. His keen eye had detected some of the printed words.

"Why," he exclaimed, "they are the proofs of the 'Hornet'!"

CHAPTER 6.
Divided Opinions.

A SUDDEN hush fell upon the crowd in the pavilion.

All eyes were turned upon Redfern.

"I—I——" stammered the astonished junior. "My hat! Manners is right! How on earth did these get into my pocket?"

"Weally, it is vewy extwaordinawy!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, surveying Redfern rather grimly through his monocle.

Tom Merry looked grave. He, like several others present, had mistaken Redfern's confusion for guilt.

"I think," said the captain of the Shell quietly, "some explanation is due from you, Redfern."

Redfern started.

"Do you mean to imply that these proofs belong to me?" he exclaimed.

"Well, it's difficult to think otherwise."

"And you always were of a literary turn of mind, you know," threw in Clampe, who had lingered in the doorway.

Clampe's words had the desired effect of increasing the suspicion against Redfern. Some of the fellows recalled the time when Reddy worked [illegible] for one of the local pap[illegible] sessed undoubted literar[illegible], and everything seemed to point to the fact that he was the editor—or one of the editors—of the "Hornet."

Another point which struck some of the juniors very forcibly was that the New House had not been libelled in the first number.

"There must be some mistake here," said Figgins.

"Yes, rather!" exclaimed Lawrence. "Either these proofs got into Reddy's pocket by accident, or——"

"Or what?" said Tom Merry.

"Somebody with a spite against Reddy put them there to get him into a row!" said Lawrence deliberately.

"Oh, come off it!" said Jack Blake. "Who would be likely to play a low-down trick of that sort?"

"Several fellows I could name!" said Lawrence.

"Sounds rather thin, to my way of thinking," said Tom Merry. "Let me see those proofs!"

Redfern was too dazed by the turn events had taken to hand over the proofs. He was crumpling them in his hand, and staring straight in front of him.

Tom Merry stepped forward and seized the papers. He glanced at one of the sheets, and frowned.

"I think the mystery of the 'Hornet' is solved once and for all," he said. "Perhaps you won't deny that this is your handwriting, Redfern?"

And Tom Merry indicated a number of corrections made in ink in the margin.

Redfern examined the writing, and gave a gasp.

"It—it's certainly very much like my fist," he said. "All the same, it's not mine!"

"I'm sorry I can't believe you."

"Then you—you think I'm responsible for that trashy rag?" asked Redfern.

"I must say I do!"

"Same here," said Jack Blake. "Further evidence seems unnecessary."

For a moment Redfern stood breathing hard. Most of the faces around him were grave and accusing.

"Is it the general opinion that I am running the 'Hornet'?" he demanded.

"I don't think there can be any question about it," said Monty Lowther, quite serious for once.

"Nor I!" said Manners.

"The evidence is absolutely conclusive," said Digby.

"Yaas, wathah! Why don't you make a clean bweast of it, Wedfern?"

Redfern's heart sank. All the same, there were loyal chums in the pavilion ready to take up the cudgels on his behalf.

"I, for one, know that you had nothing to do with this bizney, old man," said Lawrence.

"And I'm equally certain you're not guilty," said Owen promptly.

"Thank you!" said Redfern gratefully. He turned to Figgins.

"What is your opinion, Figgy?"

George Figgins hesitated for a moment before replying.

"The evidence is very strong," he said at length. "But—— Oh, dash it all! I can't believe that you are guilty. If you were, you wouldn't try to brazen it out. You'd own up."

"Of course he would!" said Fatty Wynn. "This is a trick—a rotten conspiracy of some sort to land Reddy in the soup!"

"What do you think about it all, Kerr?" asked Figgins. Kerr was the brainy man of the trio, and his opinion was always valued. Quite a number of waverers hung on Kerr's words.

"I think the real culprits have been trying to fasten the guilt on to Reddy," [illegible] quietly.

[illegible] being a New House chap, you [illegible] take that line," said Jack Blake.

"That's not fair, Blake!"

"Neither is it fair to try to shield Redfern when it's as clear as daylight that he's guilty."

"If he were guilty," said Kerr, "do you think he would be such a careless ass as to leave the proofs gaping out of his pocket? Not much! Somebody's wangled them into his pocket during the match."

"But there's his handwriting," said Tom Merry. "You can't get away from that. I suppose you'll say next that somebody forged it?"

"I think it highly probable," said Kerr.

"Oh, my hat!"

"Look here," said Redfern. "I'm not in the habit of lying. I tell you straight, I had nothing to do with this bizney. And any fellow who says or thinks otherwise is a rotten cad!"

"Bai Jove! That's puttin' it wathah stwongly," said Arthur Augustus. "It's pwacticaly a challenge, Mewwy, deah boy——"

Tom Merry stepped forward angrily.

"I'm not going to be called a cad by a fellow who deals in anonymous attacks and then denies it!" he said warmly.

Smack!

Redfern's open palm came with stinging force upon the cheek of the captain of the Shell. A murmur of excitement arn round the pavilion.

"That does it!" said Monty Lowther. "You'll have to lick him for that, Tommy."

Tom Merry nodded. A red mark showed up on his cheek.

"I'll meet you in the gym at seven o'clock," he said to Redfern.

Talbot stepped between the pair.

"There's no need to carry matters to that length," he said. "Apologise to Merry, Redfern, and——"

"Apologise? Not likely!" said Reddy. "If any apologies are due, they should come from the School House! I'm not considering any peace offers, thanks!"

Talbot flushed, and stood aside.

"That's settled, then," said Tom Merry. "You'll meet me at seven, Redfern?"

"I will! If I don't lick you, it won't be for want of trying."

And Redfern put on his coat and strode out of the pavilion.

His head was held high as he went. He was hurt, and he was still dazed to think that his word had been doubted; but he wasn't going to show the others how deeply the arrow had gone.

"Keep a stiff upper lip, old scout!" said a cheery voice behind him.

And the next moment Lawrence and Owen were abreast of him. They were no fair-weather chums; and their support was very gratifying to Reddy just then. It was good to know that he did not stand alone.

CHAPTER 7.

In the Ring.

"I WON'T allow it!"

Thus George Alfred Grundy, who, having made peace with Wilkins and Gunn, presided at the tea-table in his study.

"These sardines are top-hole!" murmured Wilkins.

"Blow the sardines! I won't allow it, I tell you!" persisted Grundy.

"What won't you allow?" mumbled Gunn, in the midst of a buttered scone.

"This silly scrap between Tom Merry and Redfern. It's a lot of tommy-rot. Those fellows who are accusing Redfern are right off the track!"

"But the proofs were in Redfern's pocket——" began Wilkins.

"Ass! That proves nothing. Anyone could have put them there while the match was on. Redfern's as innocent as I am! Anyway, there's no need for him and Merry to scrap like a couple of fags."

"What are you going to do about it?" asked Gunn.

"I shall stop the fight!" said Grundy loftily.

"What?"

"It's beneath the dignity of the Shell captain to scuffle in the ring with a New House Fourth Form bounder," said Grundy. "I shall put my foot down!"

"You'll get biffed if you do!" said Wilkins. "Take my advice, old man, and don't interfere. When there's bad blood between two fellows it's as well to let 'em go all out."

"Rats! You're talking out of your hat, George Wilkins!"

Wilkins grunted, and renewed his attack on the sardines. It was useless to argue with the great Grundy when he was like this.

Long before the time fixed for the fight a stream of juniors made their way to the gym.

The prevailing opinion was that Tom Merry would win, but not without a stern tussle. Redfern was no weakling.

"Where are you kids going?" demanded Kildare of the Sixth, as he encountered the Terrible Three and Jack Blake & Co. in the passage.

"Our Tommy is going to make some slight alterations to Redfern's face," explained Monty Lowther. "An affair of honour, you know."

"In that case," said Kildare, "I think I had better step along."

"Bwavo!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "By the way, Tom Mewwy, do you weally think you can tackle Wedfern? Because, if not, I shall be perfectly willin' to take your place."

"Keep off the grass, you fatheaded scion of a bloodthirsty race!" said Monty Lowther. "Tommy can work the oracle off his own bat. We don't want any performing tailors' dummies in the ring!"

"Weally, Lowthah——"

Skimpole of the Shell butted in.

"These primeval tendencies are most unphilosophical," he said. "I suggest that this affair should be settled by arbitration. I feel sure that a satisfactory settlement would materialise if —— Yow! You are violating my neutrality, Lowther!"

Monty Lowther had pushed the genius of the Shell forcibly aside.

"No time to listen to the long-winded platitudes of Balmycrumpet," said Lowther. "There's a fight on!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The New House fellows were early on the scene. They had collared all the best places, and with the exception of a few fellows of Clampe's kidney they were backing up Redfern.

As the School House fellows trooped in, a burst of singing arose which even Figgins could not repress.

"On the ball! On the ball!
Down with the School House, one
and all!"

"Silence!" roared Kildare.

But the New House fellows sang more lustily than ever. It was not until the captain of St. Jim's threatened to clear the gym that the tumult died down.

"Come along!" said Kildare briskly. "I'm not going to fool around here all night. Is your man ready, Figgins?"

"Yes, rather!"

Redfern whipped off his coat, and Figgy adjusted the gloves. A heated argument between Gussy and Monty Lowther, as to who should be Tom Merry's second was decided by Lowther leaping on to the platform, and keeping Gussy at bay with an Indian club.

"Seconds out!" snapped Kildare. "Time!"

Tom Merry seemed a trifle less cool than usual as he squared up to his man. The memory of that stinging smack on the cheek still rankled; and the captain of the Shell was eager to repay it with interest.

There was a swift interchange of blows, a clamour of voices as Redfern was seen to stagger against the ropes; and then a figure leapt suddenly into the ring, and an imperious voice rang out:

"I forbid the fight!"

"Gweat Scott!"

"Grundy, you ass——"

"Stand back!" roared Kildare.

But George Alfred Grundy was not to be turned from his purpose. With characteristic determination he stepped between Tom Merry and Redfern.

"Chuck it!" he commanded. "Do you hear?"

But Redfern and Tom Merry were too intent upon getting to grips with each other to heed the words of Grundy. They were scarcely aware of his existence. Each leapt at the other, with the result that George Alfred Grundy became a sort of human pancake. Redfern's left smote him with great violence below the ear, and Tom Merry's right thudded against his rips.

"Yarooooh!" yelled Grundy.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Grundy might as well have attempted to stop the war in its full tide as to stop that fight. Again the two combatants endeavoured to close with each other; and again Grundy was the recipient of their joint blows.

Kildare seized the burly Shell fellow by the collar and swung him back out of harm's way.

"Do you want to get slaughtered?" he demanded.

"Yow-ow-ow!"

"Keep off the grass, you funny idiot!"

But Grundy did not need that admonition. His collar had burst open, his tie was streaming loose, and he felt as if he had been trying conclusions with an earthquake. Grundy was a very determined youth, but even he saw now how hopeless it was to interfere.

"We warned you what would happen!" said Wilkins.

"Ow!"

"'Those who in quarrels interpose, must often wipe a crimson nose!'" quoted Gunn.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The contest was resumed without further interruption from Grundy. He was only too glad to remain where he was and nurse his injuries.

There was some fierce hitting when Tom Merry and Redfern faced each other again. Neither had waited to take the measure of the other, as was usually the case in a fight of this kind. Each was flushed with resentment; and each was anxious to get the affair over and done with.

Again Redfern was driven to the ropes. He was looking spent and sick. A couple of heavy thuds to the ribs had temporarily winded him.

"Time!" said Kildare.

Figgins took advantage of the interval to mutter some good advice to Redfern.

"Ease off a bit, old chap," he said. "You're scrapping too wildly. Look to your guard more. The only way to lick Tom Merry is to tire him out first. Save your attack until it's likely to be more effective."

It was good counsel, and Redfern fully meant to act up to it. But when he went up for the third round his intentions melted away.

Tom Merry came at him with a rush; and Reddy, suffering under a sense of wrong, resolved to give blow for blow. Careless of his defence, he hit out vigorously; and the sharp thud-thudding of blows could be heard all over the gym.

There was no shouting now. The School House fellows were rather awed by the grimness of it; and the New House fellows were too concerned for the welfare of their man.

More than once Redfern came dangerously near to being knocked out. But he always recovered before Tom Merry could follow up his advantage; and in this way he survived the round, though he looked worn and haggard when Kildare called "Time!"

Figgins gave no further advice. What Redfern needed now was to be thoroughly freshened; and Figgins set about the task manfully. He sponged Reddy's face—which was already the worse for wear—and then he set a small gale blowing with his towel. Reddy's flagging energies revived; and in the fourth round he more than held his own.

All the same, it was a very punishing round. Tom Merry recoiled from a smashing blow between the eyes; and shortly afterwards Redfern received a right-arm swing to the temple which dazed him.

The honours of the round rested with Redfern, but the New House junior was gasping painfully as he came to rest on Figgy's knee. Tom Merry was in little better case. Some of the onlookers were beginning to wish that Grundy had been successful in his efforts to stop the fight.

Redfern was less fortunate in the next round. All the punch had gone out of his blows, which were wild and for the most part futile. And presently Tom Merry sailed in with an upper-cut which lifted his opponent fairly off his feet.

Kildare began to count. Redfern scrambled up, only to go down again before a vigorous blow in the chest; and this time he looked like being counted out.

Tom Merry had reserved all his remaining strength for that last blow, and his condition was nearly as bad as that of his fallen opponent. He felt his knees sagging under him; and Kildare's voice, counting out the seconds, seemed a long way off. He leaned faintly against the ropes, pumping in breath.

Kildare had counted eight, when Redfern tottered to his feet, and lurched across the ring to meet his opponent. Reddy had no end of pluck.

"Stop!"

The captain of St. Jim's, glancing keenly at the two juniors, saw that the fight had gone far enough, if not too far. To allow it to continue, when Redfern so persistently refused to take the knock-out, would not be humane.

"I'm going on!" muttered Redfern, beating the air feebly with his gloved fists. "Let me alone, Kildare!"

"You're not fit," said the big Sixth-Former. And, gently but firmly, he assisted Reddy to the ringside.

There was no uproar from the crowd. Most of the fellows realised that in stopping the fight Kildare had done the decent thing. It had gone on long enough.

Now that the grim business was over, and his head had time to cool, Redfern felt less resentful towards his opponent. After Figgins had patched him up a little, he crossed over to Tom Merry.

"Will you shake hands, Merry?" he asked, extending his own.

It was not Tom Merry's way to bear malice, but his pride would not allow him to make peace with a fellow who—as he thought—had libelled the School House and then denied it.

"I'm not shaking hands with an outsider!" he said.

"Very well!" said Redfern, biting his lip. "Then there's no more to be said."

And Reddy limped out of the ring. There was plenty of sympathy and consolation waiting for him; but he wanted neither just then. He preferred—for a time, at any rate—to be left alone.

CHAPTER 8.
Kerr Takes a Hand.

"LET'S put it to Kerr!" suggested Owen.

"All serene, old scout!" said Lawrence.

"Something's got to be done!"

"Yes, rather! Reddy can't remain under a cloud, like this."

Several days had elapsed since the fight in the gym, and School House and New House—so far as the junior sections were concerned, at any rate—were scarcely on speaking terms.

Seldom had there been such a definite split between the rival Houses. The New House remained loyal to Redfern, despite the weight of evidence against him. The School House fellows, on the contrary, were decidedly anti-Redfern, with the possible exception of George Alfred Grundy, who didn't count.

Ever since suspicion had first fallen upon Redfern, Lawrence and Owen had striven hard to establish their chum's innocence. They had kept their eyes and ears open in the hope of obtaining some clue which might lead to the downfall of the fellows really responsible for the "Hornet," but nothing had come to light.

Neither Owen nor Lawrence was a duffer; but they both agreed that this was a case for Kerr. The Scotch junior had plenty of sagacity and shrewdness, and if he applied himself to the task of tracking down the culprits he was pretty certain to have something to show for his efforts.

Reddy's chums found Kerr playing chess with Figgins, and making rings round him. Figgy was no match for

Kerr at chess. Very few fellows were, as a matter of fact.

"Sorry to barge in," said Owen, "but we'd like a word with you, Kerr."

Kerr swept the board of Figgy's remaining pawns.

"Fire away!" he said.

"I'll quit, if it's a private confab," said Figgins, rising.

"That's all right," said Lawrence. "The fact is, we want Kerr's help."

"About Reddy?" asked Kerr.

Lawrence nodded.

"Reddy's not been the same since his scrap with Tom Merry," he said. "This 'Hornet' bizney has got on his nerves. We know he's innocent, of course, but—well, it would be nice to know who the real culprits are. The School House bounders would have to climb down then."

"Exactly," said Kerr.

"Owen and I have been racking our brains and chasing after clues, but our luck has been out. We're not 'tecs, you know. It needs a really smart chap to fathom this thing out."

"Therefore, you've come to Kerr?" said Figgins. "Well, you couldn't do better. Tell him he's got a nice, kind face, and he's pretty certain to take up the case for you."

"Will you, Kerr?" asked Owen.

"Delighted!" said Kerr. "I'll do my best. But you mustn't expect miracles to happen. Fellows who are cunning enough to wangle proofs into another chap's pocket are cunning enough for anything, and they take some catching."

"It's jolly decent of you to take this on," said Owen gratefully.

"Rats! I'm just as keen as anybody to get Reddy out of this rotten hole."

"If you want any help, rely on us," said Lawrence.

"I'll lend a hand, too, if there's any hard hitting to be done," said Figgins. "You can tackle the thinking part of the bizney, Kerr, and leave the slogging to us."

Kerr nodded, and reached for his cap.

"Starting already?" asked Owen, in surprise.

"Right now," said Kerr. "But, as I said before, don't expect miracles to happen. They won't. I'm only an amateur detective, you know—a good many streets below Sherlock Holmes."

"You'll make two of Holmes some day!" said Figgins, with genuine admiration.

A moment later the juniors saw Kerr wheeling his bicycle across the quad. Lawrence and Owen nodded to Figgins, and went along to Redfern's study to tell him the news.

"Now we sha'n't be long!" said Lawrence, slapping his chum on the back. "Kerr's taking up the case."

Redfern grunted. He was feeling down and out in these days, and it seemed too much to hope that Kerr would be successful in his enterprise.

"It's very decent of Kerr," he said. "All the same, I think he'll find he's bitten off more than he can chew. Mysteries of this sort take some solving."

"Never say die!" said Owen. "I know what's wrong with you, old chap. You've got the blues—bad! And the finest cure for the blues is——"

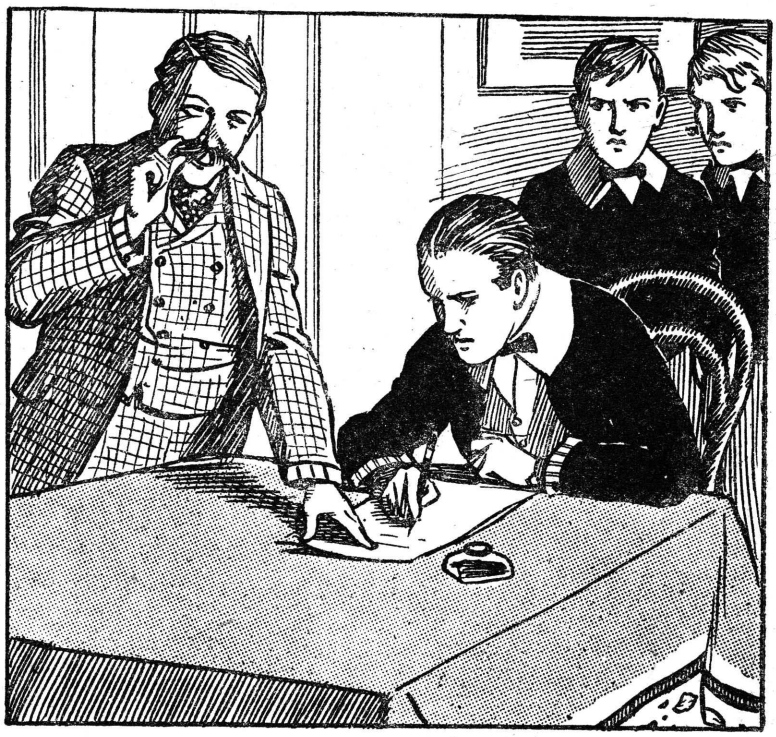
"A feed!" said Lawrence.

"Precisely!"

And Owen started to lay the table, while Lawrence made some toast.

The meal was not a great success. Redfern ate little, and spoke less. His chums attempted to get him interested in the footer prospects, and in amateur theatricals; but Reddy was not to be drawn.

"I know I'm like a bear with a sore head," he remarked, when the table had been cleared, "but I simply can't help it. It's the thought that those School House fellows imagine me to be a cad and a liar, I suppose."



Racke's Signs!
(See Chapter 10.)

"They'll soon get to know better," said Lawrence confidently. "Leave it to Kerr. He won't let the grass grow under his feet."

"Not likely!" said Owen.

It was nearly locking-up time when Kerr returned from his excursion. Lawrence and Owen met him as he came in.

"Anything to report?" asked Lawrence.

Kerr shook his head.

"I've been over to Wayland, to see if I could get on the track of the fellow who printed the 'Hornet,'" he said, "but there's nothing doing. I saw several of the printer merchants, but they assured me that they wouldn't touch a rag of that description—and I can quite believe them."

"By the way," said Owen suddenly, "do you remember a beast called Sholey, who printed a spoof number of 'Tom Merry's Weekly' once?"

"That's the fellow I was after," said Kerr. "I went along to his digs, but it appears he left Wayland some time since. He made the place too hot to hold him. I understand he's cleared off to Westwood."

"That's no reason why he shouldn't have printed the 'Hornet,'" said Lawrence.

"No," said Kerr thoughtfully; "I hadn't time to go as far as Westwood. That's a jaunt I must make later. Meanwhile, I've done something else."

"What?" exclaimed Lawrence and Owen eagerly.

"I've had some notices printed at the foot of the theatrical bills which are posted up in the town. Here's one!"

And Kerr handed over a copy of the bill. The announcement at the foot of the printed sheet ran as follows:

"NOTICE!

"If the editor of the 'Hornet' will call at the stage-door of the Theatre Royal, Wayland, on Wednesday evening next at seven o'clock, he will hear of something to his advantage."

"My hat!" said Owen. "Do you think the editor of the 'Hornet' will bite?"

"No, I don't," said Kerr frankly. "But it's just possible that I shall get hold of a clue that way. Somebody might turn up who can throw some light on the affair. It's just possible."

"By Jove, yes!" said Lawrence excitedly. "It's a ripping wheeze. You'll be outside the theatre on Wednesday evening, of course?"

"You bet!" grinned Kerr. "It will be necessary for me to adopt a disguise for the occasion. I think I'll be a literary cove from London, taking a fatherly interest in the 'Hornet.' It'll be dark at seven, and if any fellow from St. Jim's turns up he won't be able to penetrate my disguise."

"Good!" said Lawrence. "I wish you luck, old man!"

"Many thanks, my dear Watson!" said Kerr gravely.

And he went along to join Figgins, satisfied that the afternoon had not been entirely wasted, and wondering what Wednesday might bring forth.

CHAPTER 9.

Not Nice for Trimble.

THE chief topic of conversation at St. Jim's on the following day was the curious announcement at the foot of the theatrical bills.

Quite a number of juniors had seen it, including Racke and Crooke.

Those bright youths had no intention of responding to the advertisement. They guessed that someone was setting a bait for them, and they were too spry to nibble at it.

"'Will you walk into my parlour,

said the spider to the fly!" chuckled Racke.

Crooke grinned.

"Somebody's hoping to make a haul!" he said. "All I can say is, they'll be unlucky!"

"Doocid unlucky!" said Racke. "We're not goin' to be drawn by an ancient wheeze of that sort!"

"All the same, I'd like to go along to the theatre on Wednesday evenin' just to see who is workin' this little stunt!"

"So should I!" said Racke. "But we're goin' to stay indoors and do our prep, like good little boys! No use lookin' for trouble!"

"I expect it's a New House bounder!" said Crooke.

"Shouldn't be surprised! Redfern's got plenty of pals who are anxious to clear him."

"I say, you fellows——"

Baggy Trimble showed himself in the doorway of Racke's study. He was looking very excited.

"Clear out!" growled Racke. "There's nothin' for tea, and even if there were, we'd prefer feedin' Herries' bulldog to you!"

"Oh, really, Racke! I'm not grub-hunting——"

"My hat! You don't mean to say you've got a new aim in life?"

"It's about the 'Hornet' bizney!" said Baggy.

Racke pricked up his ears.

"Hold on, Baggy, old chap!" he said affably. "What is it?"

Crooke had changed colour; but Baggy Trimble was too short-sighted to note the effect of his remark.

"What do you mean?" asked Racke sharply.

"Haven't you seen the announcement? Everybody's talking about it. If the editor of the 'Hornet' goes to the stage-door of the Theatre Royal at seven o'clock on Wednesday, he'll hear of something to his advantage. In other words," continued Baggy, with an air of wisdom, "he'll rope in the shekels!"

"Well?" said Racke, feeling considerably relieved.

Baggy Trimble's little round eyes glittered.

"Don't you see that it's the chance of a lifetime?" he exclaimed. "I don't suppose the real editor of the 'Hornet' will go within a mile of the Theatre Royal. He might not have seen the notice, to start with; and if he has he'll probably think somebody's pulling his leg. So if somebody else went along—me, for instance——"

"You!" gasped Crooke.

"Certainly! If I went along at the appointed time, and said I was the editor of the 'Hornet,' I should come into a small fortune! Er—that is to say——"

Trimble hesitated. He had let his tongue run away with him, and he was afraid now that Racke and Crooke would take the scheme out of his hands, and make a claim on their own account.

But, to Baggy's surprise, neither Racke nor Crooke seemed to have any desire to queer his pitch.

"A dashed fine wheeze!" said Racke, winking at Crooke. "Go in and win, old fellow!"

"You—you really mean that?" stammered Baggy Trimble.

"Of course! Go along to the theatre by all means, an' tell the merchant who's waitin' for you that you are the editor of the 'Hornet,' an' you've come for the dibs. Make him clearly understand that it's you who runs the rag. He's bound to be impressed. It might mean fame for you, as well as fortune."

"Yes, rather!" said Crooke. "I'd like to have a shot at the wheeze myself. But first come, first served! We'll stand aside, won't we, Racke?"

"Like true sportsmen!" nodded Racke. "Jolly good luck to you, Baggy! When you get into the Upper Ten, don't forget your old pals!"

"It's awfully decent of you fellows to——"

"Cut it short!" said Crooke. "We delight in making other people happy, don't we, Racke?"

"Absolutely!" said Racke.

Baggy Trimble rolled out of Racke's study like a fellow in a dream. He was too obtuse to see that his leg had been pulled; and he gloated at the prospect of receiving a nice little nest-egg at the hands of some genial philanthropist. Something to his advantage! Surely it must be cash, Baggy reflected. Nothing else was of much advantage, except the grub which cash could procure.

Wednesday was only two days off, but to Baggy Trimble it seemed an age. Long before seven o'clock on the fateful day he went over to Wayland, and took up his stand outside the stage-door of the Theatre Royal.

Several people passed in and out while Baggy stood there, but no one heeded him. He began to wonder whether the announcement was, after all, merely a hoax.

Just as the neighbouring clocks were striking the hour a dapper little gentleman, wearing spectacles, and with a Trilby hat pulled down over his forehead, approached the stage-door.

A thrill ran through Baggy Trimble. Could this be the Good Samaritan?

The dapper gentleman peered closely at Baggy, and the fat junior considered that the time was ripe for him to speak.

"I—I say!" he began. "Are you looking for the editor of the 'Hornet'?"

"I am!" said the stranger. "Have I the pleasure——"

Baggy Trimble puffed out his chest.

"I'm your man!" he said.

"Splendid! Then I have not come all the way from London—Fleet Street, to be precise—in vain. The 'Hornet' is a remarkable publication—most remarkable! Do you run it yourself, or have you a big editorial staff?"

"I do it all off my own bat," said Baggy Trimble promptly. "Everything's mine, from the editorial downwards. I write all the articles, all the stories, and all the poems!"

"Then you must be a great genius, Master——"

"Trimble," said Baggy. "Everybody knows me at St. Jim's. But look here! Let's get down to business! Why have you arranged this meeting with me—to give me some capital to carry on the good work?"

The dapper gentleman hesitated.

"I've got no funds as yet!" Baggy Trimble went on. "I want somebody to set the ball rolling!"

"Indeed! I shall be most happy to do so!"

Baggy Trimble nearly danced with delight.

"That's ripping!" he said. "I'm awfully glad Racke and Crooke advised me to come and see you and try my luck——I—I mean——"

"So someone else prompted you to come here this evening?"

"Yes. They said it would be a jolly good wheeze for me to pretend I was the—er—that is——"

Baggy Trimble pulled himself up with a jerk. He was getting into deep waters, and he had no wish to prolong the conversation, in case his companion should begin to suspect things.

"Look here," said Baggy desperately, "you promised just now to set the ball rolling——"

"And I'm a man of my word!" said the stranger, advancing grimly upon the fat junior.

The next moment Baggy Trimble was swept fairly off his feet. He landed on the pavement with a terrific bump.

"Yaroooh!" yelled Baggy. "Gerr-away! Have you gone potty?"

"No," said the other, breathing hard. "I'm just beginning to set the ball rolling!"

And he proceeded to dribble the outraged Trimble along the pavement.

"Yow! Beast! Lemme gerrup!" gasped Baggy.

But the stranger continued to keep the human ball rolling, and eventually Baggy Trimble shot off the edge of the kerb and landed in a puddle. The muddy water splashed over his Etons, and when he at last managed to scramble to his feet he was a very complete wreck.

"Oh, you rotter!" he groaned. "I—I'll give you in charge for assault! I'll tell the police! This was all a spoof! Where are you? Come and show yourself, you beastly funk!"

But the dapper gentleman was gone.

CHAPTER 10.

Self-condemned.

"WHAT luck?"

Lawrence and Owen fired the question simultaneously at Kerr. They had been waiting for him in the gateway of St. Jim's.

"I've not done so badly," said Kerr. He had got rid of his disguise in Wayland, and was no longer the dapper little gentleman from whom Baggy Trimble had expected a windfall.

"Did anyone turn up at the theatre?" asked Owen.

"Yes; our dear pal Trimble."

"Trimble!" gasped Lawrence. "Do you mean to say he is the editor of the 'Hornet'?"

"Not much!" grinned Kerr. "I knew when I first saw his fairy form outside the theatre that he couldn't possibly be the editor. He came along to make a false claim."

"My hat!"

"Racke and Crooke put him up to it," Kerr went on. "They stuffed him up with a lot of rot about the fame and fortune awaiting him if he pretended to be the editor. Of course, I gave the fat worm a drubbing, but not before he had blurted out one or two useful tit-bits of information. There's no question now, to my mind, that Racke and Crooke are the guilty parties. I'm equally convinced that Sholey is printing the rag. No other printer would touch it with a barge-pole."

"Good!" said Lawrence grimly. "We'll go along and tackle Racke and Crooke——"

"Hold on!" said Kerr sharply. "That wouldn't be any use. They'd flatly deny any connection with the affair."

"Then what do you intend to do?" said Owen, aghast. "Let the matter rest?"

"Far from it, old scout! We've got to bring it home to the rotters somehow, and I think I know a way."

"Trot it out, then!" said Lawrence. "The sooner this 'Hornet' bizney is settled the better. It's been hanging fire long enough already."

Kerr lowered his voice as the juniors entered the New House.

"To-morrow afternoon," he said, "I shall work another impersonation stunt. This time I shall be Sholey, the printer, paying a friendly call at St. Jim's to see Racke and Crooke. They'll be furious when they see me, and they are pretty certain to blurt out something that will give the whole show away."

"I think that's quite a good wheeze," said Lawrence. "There are only two doubtful points."

"Namely?"

"The first is, you may be off the track in thinking that Sholey prints the 'Hornet.'"

"I'll risk that."

"And secondly, are you sure you can play Sholey to the life?"

"Of course! Do I usually make a hash of things?" said Kerr warmly.

"No; but—well, it's no fool's job," said Lawrence.

"But then, you see, I'm no fool!" said Kerr cheerfully.

Lawrence and Owen were forced to admit that Kerr was one of the few fellows at St. Jim's who could have tackled a job of this sort successfully. They put no further obstacles in his way, but decided to let him go ahead without interference from them.

When afternoon lessons were over next day, Kerr disappeared on his bicycle. He was not seen to return, either, but about an hour later a small man, rather of the bookmaker type, approached the gates of St. Jim's.

The Terrible Three were standing in the gateway, chatting to Cardew and Clive. They viewed the new-comer with extreme disfavour.

Taggles was within his lodge at the time, taking liquid refreshment of as strong a form as a harsh Government would allow. He did not see the little man stroll casually in at the gates, or he would certainly have inquired his business.

"Who is this enterprisin' cove?" murmured Cardew. "Looks as if he could do with a wash."

"Why," said Manners, drawing a quick breath, "it's Sholey, the printer! He's got a nerve to show his face here, I must say!"

"Do my aged eyes deceive me," said Monty Lowther, "or is this the merchant we had occasion to thrash once in Wayland?"

"That's the chap!" said Tom Merry, knitting his brows. "Does he want an encore, I wonder?"

Mr. Sholey approached the group of juniors.

"Good-afternoon, young gentlemen!" he said. "Nice weather for the time of year."

"Clear out!" said Tom Merry sharply.

"Toddle along to fresh fields and pastures new!" advised Cardew. "There are some things I can't stand at any price, an' your face is one of 'em. It's a positive eyesore!"

"If you don't buzz off," said Clive, "we'll give you a helping hand—or, rather, a boot!"

Mr. Sholey looked pained.

"Alas! how black is man's ingratitude!" he murmured.

"Look here," said Tom Merry, clenching his fists, "are you going? We don't want your sort hanging around here!"

Mr. Sholey emitted a low chuckle.

"Ripping!" he said. "I shall pass muster all right."

"What do you mean?"

"I mean that my disguise is flawless."

"You—your disguise!" stuttered Tom Merry.

"Yes. I happen to be Kerr of the New House, you see!"

"My only Aunt Sempronia!" gasped Monty Lowther. "Kerr!"

"Wherefore this thusness?" ejaculated Cardew.

Kerr explained.

"I'm hoping to clear up the mystery of the 'Hornet,'" he said. "Give me a free hand, and I'll guarantee to do it."

"Whom do you suspect?" asked Manners.

"The same merry old partners—Racke and Crooke!"

"My hat!"

"What makes you think that?" asked Tom Merry.

"I've been doing some amateur detective work on Redfern's account," said Kerr.

"Oh!"

"And if you keep an eye on Racke and Crooke this afternoon you'll see them in the various stages of being bowled out."

Monty Lowther shook his head incredulously.

"It's a false scent, if you ask me!" he said.

"Time will show," said Kerr.

And he passed on.

Many hostile glances were directed at him as he crossed the quadrangle. Even to the fellows who didn't know Mr. Sholey he appeared thoroughly disreputable.

He was obliged to proceed to Racke's study by a circuitous route, or he would never have got there at all. On one occasion George Alfred Grundy gave chase to him, and on another he caught a glimpse of Mr. Railton, and was obliged to take cover.

Kerr was rather breathless when he at last reached Racke's study.

From within came sounds of revelry. Evidently Racke & Co. were having one of their frequent "flutters."

The impostor pulled himself together, and threw open the door.

"Good-afternoon, gentlemen!" he said blandly.

Racke and Cooke, who were seated at the table with Clampe of the New House, looked up quickly. Anger and surprise and dismay were blended in their expressions.

"Sholey!" muttered Racke. "Why have you come here? Clear out, you dashed fool, before people begin to suspect things!"

The visitor advanced towards the couch, and proceeded to make himself at home. Clampe darted quickly to the door and locked it, and Crooke cleared the table of playing-cards and other traces of a gay time.

"You fool!" hissed Racke, turning to Mr. Sholey. "I told you that whenever we wanted to discuss anything about the 'Hornet' we'd come over to Westwood to see you. Don't you realise what you're lettin' us in for by comin' here?"

Mr. Sholey smiled.

"You'll do yourself no good, either," remarked Crooke. "If Tom Merry and the others see you here they'll give you the order of the boot!"

"You don't say so!" said Mr. Sholey.

"What do you want here, anyway?" growled Clampe.

"I've come to tell you that I can't go on printing the 'Hornet.'"

"Why not?" demanded Racke. "This is absurd! You can't plead shortage of paper. When we were over at Westwood the other day you said you had reams and reams of it!"

"Perhaps so, Mr. Racke. All the same, I'm not printing any further copies."

Racke muttered a savage imprecation. He looked as if he would like to hurl himself upon his visitor.

"If it's money you're wantin', you treacherous hound——" he began.

"It isn't! And no fancy names, please!"

"But—but, look here!" stammered Crooke. "You can't leave us in the lurch like this!"

"I can, and I will! I've been thinking the matter over, and I've come to the conclusion that I ought never to have handled libellous stuff of that sort!"

"My only aunt!" gasped Racke. "That's rather a new line for you to take, isn't it?"

"So strongly do I feel about the matter," pursued Mr. Sholey, "that I purpose seeing your headmaster, and apologising to him for having printed such pernicious piffle."

"What!" shouted Racke.

"I will see Dr. Holmes at once," said Mr. Sholey, rising to his feet. "I can't think how I ever allowed myself to dishonour my profession by publishing shameful libels."

The speaker moved to the door. Racke sprang after him, and caught him by the arm.

"You must be potty!" he exclaimed, turning pale. "Don't you realise what this means? If you go to the Head we shall all be sacked!"

"A fate which would be by no means undeserved," was the reply.

The three rascals stared blankly at Mr. Sholey. When they had last seen the printer he had been servile and obliging—almost ready to lick their boots. This sudden change in his demeanour was most disconcerting.

For once in a way the nerve of Aubrey Racke quite failed him.

"Don't!" he gasped. "Anything but that! We'll do anything you want us to, provided you keep this from the Head's ears!"

Mr. Sholey tugged reflectively at his moustache, which nearly came off in the process.

"Very well," he said. "I won't take such an extreme measure. But you must comply with one condition."

"Anything you like," said Racke, in great relief.

"Good! Take your fountain-pen and some paper, and prepare to write at my dictation."

Cadet Notes.

We wonder how many of our readers saw the Lord Mayor's Show? Those who did must certainly have noticed, besides the heroes of the Navy, Army, and Royal Air Force, the several regiments of Cadets. Wherever they passed along the route they were loudly acclaimed by the dense masses of spectators, who could but admire their general smartness. Probably never before have the Cadets taken so large a part in this procession; but then, never before have the Cadet Corps been of such importance to the country as they are now. The war is won, and this country has lost much. Everyone must do their best to lighten their country's burden. It is the duty of every boy to make himself fit.

There is nothing like the Cadet Training for young lads. Members of Cadet Corps meet new friends, and compete with them in physical exercises and a certain amount of drill. This teaches them discipline and smartness, and for those who get on there comes the lessons of responsibility and the practice of command. It costs only a little in an ordinary Corps, and takes only a little of its members' time. Its benefits are great. For boys who intend later to enter the Royal Air Force, special consideration is given if they have been members of any recognised Cadet Corps, and other similar privileges are likely to follow. If boys only knew the enjoyment and the opportunities they were missing they would all write at once to the C.A.V.R., Judges' Quadrangle, Royal Courts of Justice, W.C. 2, and ask for particulars of their nearest Corps and an introduction to its Commanding Officer.

Racke wonderingly obeyed. He seated himself at the table, and Mr. Sholey began to dictate.

"We, the undersigned, hereby confess that——"

"Hold on!" said Racke uneasily. "Have I got to write this down?"

"Or go before your headmaster! You can take your choice!"

Racke gritted his teeth, and started to write. It occurred to him that he might possibly be able to destroy the incriminating document afterwards.

"We, the undersigned," repeated Mr. Sholey, "hereby confess that we are solely responsible for the production of the 'Hornet,' and that no one else, with the exception of Mr. Sholey, printer, of Westwood, had a hand in the affair."

"That'll do, I think," said Mr. Sholey. "You will now sign your names in turn at the foot of the statement."

Again Racke hesitated. But the prospect of appearing before Dr. Holmes spurred him to action. Anything would be better than having to account for his misdeeds to the Head.

Racke signed his name, and Crooke and Clampe signed theirs also. They had barely done so when a clamour of voices was heard in the passage. There was a sharp knock on the door, followed by Tom Merry's voice:

"What's going on in here?"

The bogus Mr. Sholey stepped quickly to the door.

"Don't unlock it!" sang out Crooke, in alarm.

Mr. Sholey, keeping a wary eye on the precious document, which the rascals had signed, unlocked the door, and threw it open. The next moment the study was taken by storm.

The Terrible Three, Cardew and Levison and Clive, Jack Blake & Co., Grundy and Wilkins and Gunn, all swarmed into the apartment. Racke and his accomplices fervently wished that the floor would open and swallow them up.

Their discomfiture was complete when Mr. Sholey proceeded to discard the various articles contributing to his disguise, and stood revealed as Kerr of the New House!

"Spoofed!" yelled Racke.

And he darted towards the paper on the table.

But Kerr got there first. He picked up the document, and faced round upon the crowd.

"This will interest you fellows," he said. "The editorial staff of the 'Hornet' are here. This is their confession."

The juniors pressed forward to read the statement. A murmur of indignation arose, swelling at length into a roar.

"You uttah wottahs!"

"You contemptible worms!"

"And we've been blaming Redfern!"

It looked for a moment as if Racke & Co. were in danger of being lynched. They backed against the wall, the cynosure of furious, accusing eyes.

"It seems that we owe Redfern an apology," said Tom Merry. "If it hadn't been for Kerr this might never have come to light. We'll deal with these cads later."

"Yaas, wathah! They ought to be made to wun the gauntlet!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, in great indignation.

"They ought to go before the Head!" said Jack Blake. "Not so much for running the 'Hornet' as for fastening it on to Redfern. It's pretty obvious, now, how it happened. One of the beauties wangled the proofs into Reddy's pocket."

"Look here," said Racke, "there's no need to make a song about it. It was only a joke, and——"

"We'll endeavour to teach you that jokes of this sort are in rotten bad taste," said Tom Merry.

"Yes, rather!"

"I've a jolly good mind to report this to Kildare," continued the captain of the Shell. "Then the Head would get to know, and you'd probably be fired out of St. Jim's."

"You wouldn't dare!" said Racke, white to the lips.

"Don't be too certain on that point! I think I shall put it to the vote to-night in the dorm whether we report you or punish you ourselves. Anyway, you're going through the mill."

"Hear, hear!" said Jack Blake. "We can rely on the Shell to administer justice!"

Tom Merry strode out of the study, and the rest of the juniors followed. Kerr vanished in the direction of the New House, to break the good news to all concerned.

"Do you know," said George Alfred Grundy, as the School House fellows went along the passage, "I had an idea all along that Racke & Co. were mixed up in this bizney. Matter of fact, I was just about to expose them."

"Expose your grandmother!" snorted Monty Lowther. "Do you think we're going to swallow a yarn like that? Why, you wouldn't have fathomed the mystery in a month of Sundays!"

"My hat!" roared Grundy. "I'm not going to stand——"

"Then you can sit down!" said the humorist of the Shell.

And George Alfred Grundy collapsed with great suddenness in the Shell passage.

CHAPTER 11.
Squaring Accounts.

"GENTLEMEN——" began Tom Merry.

"On the ball!"

"You see before you two utterly worthless rotters——"

"Hear, hear!"

"Who are here to-night to answer for their offences!"

"Yes, rather!"

The faces of most of the fellows in the Shell dormitory were set and stern.

"These cads have not only published a slanderous rag," continued Tom Merry, "but they conspired to fasten the guilt on to Redfern of the New House. The question is, shall they be punished by higher authority, or shall we take the law into our own hands? Before you vote, gentlemen, is there anyone here who cares to defend the prisoners?"

No one came forward. Racke and Crooke were so palpably guilty that not a single fellow in the Shell had a word to say in their defence.

"Very well!" said Tom Merry, after a pause. "We will now take the vote. Those who are in favour of these rotters being dealt with by the Head, show your hands!"

Quite a number of hands went up, and Racke and Crooke looked very uneasy as Tom Merry began to count.

"Nine," said the captain of the Shell, at length. "Now we'll take those who prefer justice to be done here and now."

Again hands were up; and Tom Merry took the count.

"Eleven," he announced. "That means that we deal with the cads ourselves. Who is game to slip over to the New House and tell them of our decision, so that they will know what to do with Clampe?"

"I'll go!" volunteered Talbot.

"Mind your eye!" warned Monty Lowther. "Ratty may be on the prowl!"

Talbot nodded.

"I can take care of myself!" he said.

When he had gone the Shell fellows lined up in two rows, armed with towels, bolsters, and other weapons of attack; and Racke and Crooke were made to pass through the lines. They walked at first, but very soon broke into a run under the stinging shower of blows which rained upon them right and left.

Both Racke and Crooke had had enough by the time they reached the end of the lines; but their troubles were not yet over. They were made to turn back, and the juniors, remembering those anonymous attacks upon them in the "Hornet," smote with renewed vigour.

The rascals of the Shell were squirming and groaning on the floor at the finish; and the avengers, leaving them to sort themselves out, got into bed.

In the New House dormitory the oily Clampe had been punished in much the same way, and Talbot returned undetected.

Early next moring Tom Merry made a special point of going over to the New House to see Redfern. He was accompanied by about a dozen School House fellows.

Redfern was chatting in his study with Lawrence and Owen. The cloud was lifted now, and he was smiling as the School House juniors trooped in.

Tom Merry stepped forward rather shamefacedly.

"I was a prize idiot, Reddy, to blame you in connection with the 'Hornet' bizney," he said. "I ought to have known better. I must say the evidence looked jolly black against you; but even so I might have known you to be above a mean trick of that sort. I'm sorry we should have scrapped about it; and I'm sorry, too, that I jumped to such a fat headed conclusion!"

"Yaas, wathah! I've been neahly as big an ass as Tom Mewwy!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weally, you fellahs! I see nothin' whatevah to cackle about. Of course, I could nevah be such a widiculous ass as Tom Mewwy, but——"

"There will be a dead Gussy lying about if you don't dry up!" warned the captain of the Shell.

"Look here, Reddy!" said Jack Blake. "If you'd like to improve your form at footer, you can take a free-kick at each of us in turn! We deserve it!"

"Hanging wouldn't be too bad a fate for us!" said Monty Lowther penitently. "Say but the word, and we'll go and string ourselves up on separate trees in the quad!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Redfern smiled at his visitors. Their expressions of regret were none the less sincere for being jokingly expressed.

"It's quite all right!" said Reddy. "I won't say I wasn't rather hurt about it. It cut pretty deeply for a time. But it's all over now, and we'll let it rest. There's my hand on it!"

"You're a brick, Reddy!" said Tom Merry, as he gripped the proffered hand. "Not many fellows would be so ready to overlook it. Only one thing remains to be done now."

"What's that?" asked Lawrence.

"We've got to stamp out this rotten 'Hornet' affair once and for all. I propose we make a raid on Sholey's premises over at Westwood. He's an out-and-out rotter, and we'll teach him to keep his paws off such things in future."

"Good!" said Redfern. "Count me in!"

After lessons that day the proposed raid duly took place. Tom Merry & Co., and Redfern & Co., and Figgins & Co. cycled over to Westwood.

Figgins and Fatty Wynn were very

proud of Kerr's accomplishment in bowling out the plotters; and even the School House fellows had to admit that it was a distinct feather in the cap of their rivals.

Mr. Sholey was not expecting visitors that afternoon; but he had them, all the same. They did not remain long on his premises, but quite long enough to effect a very complete transformation, both to the premises and to Mr. Sholey's personal appearance.

In his baffled fury, the printer threatened to make a complaint to the headmaster of St. Jim's; but the juniors cared nothing for his threats, and they told him so.

Their last glance at Mr. Sholey revealed that despicable person sprawling in a large pool of ink, his face black as a nigger minstrel's. His language was far from choice as he watched the retreating juniors. His punishment had been ample and effective, and he was not likely to give any more trouble for a considerable time.

No further number of the "Hornet" appeared. The paper had died an untimely and violent death, and the original copies were collected and burnt.

Racke and Crooke kept well out of the limelight during the next few days. Aubrey Racke, in particular, felt the situation acutely. And if anyone wished to touch him on a raw spot, and to rouse him into a state of impotent fury, it was only necessary to ask him a certain question which up till recently had been asked in vain:

"Who is the editor of the 'Hornet'?"

THE END.

(Don't miss next Wednesday's Great Story of Tom Merry & Co. at St. Jim's—"THE CHUMS OF NUMBER FIVE!"—by Martin Clifford.)

Extracts from "THE GREYFRIARS HERALD" and "TOM MERRY'S WEEKLY."

A LESSON FOR HOSKINS. By Neil Rayner.

"ONE! Two! Three! Four!"

Sampson Quincy Iffley Field—otherwise Squiff—and Hoskins, the musical genius of the Shell, were sitting shoulder to shoulder at the piano in the music-room, and as Hoskins finished counting all their hands fell on the keys at once.

A most awful row started then; it was just like someone falling downstairs with a tray full of tea-things. I happened to be passing the door just as it happened, and it pretty nearly floored me—and I can stand a good bit, I may mention.

When I passed the door again about five minutes later the duet was just finishing, and I heard Hoskins yelling out in his excitable way:

"Bravo, Squiff! You've done jolly well! I knew at the very start that I'd make a pianist of you in no time. I've always said that with my particular system I could teach anyone to play in two or three weeks. All the fellows have been jeering at me, and saying that I was talking out of my hat, just because that fat ass, Bunter, couldn't learn. Why, I'd defy anyone to teach that porpoise anything!"

He was still talking like this when I had got too far away to hear any more.

Of course, old Hoskins is all right really, and everybody likes him all right, but there isn't a chap in the whole of Greyfriars who can stick his musical rot. And, as a matter of fact, everyone—including me—had been getting absolutely fed up to the eyebrows for some time past, because he had been going round the place bragging about the way he could teach people to play the piano.

In my opinion, it wouldn't be much to brag about even if he could teach as he said, and nobody else cared a fig about it. But Hoskins didn't see it. He's like that, you know; can't seem to see that he's boring fellows to death with his swank.

Anyway, that doesn't matter now. Some Johnny—Shakespeare, I think it was—said that "Pride goeth before a fall," and I thought as I went along the corridor that Hoskins would be sure to get a fall before long. And he did, too!

But that doesn't matter, either, just for the present. I must tell the yarn straight along from the start, or else I shall get in such a beastly mess with it that you won't know what it's all about when I've finished.

The great thing was that Hoskins was swanking all over the place about the remarkable way in which he had taught Squiff to play the piano in three weeks, and I must say that it struck me as being a bit unusual.

Well, there was a concert coming off in the village that evening, in aid of disabled soldiers—and a very good cause, too—and Hoskins had been asked to play.

Of course, he was on it like a shot, and then it had occurred to him that it would be a jolly good idea for him and Squiff to play a duet. They were having a final practice for this when I went past the music-room.

I was just starting on my prep when Johnny Bull shoved his head round the door, and asked me if I had seen anything of Squiff.

"He's in the music-room with Hoskins, and they're kicking up a nice old row between 'em!" I replied.

"There's a Captain Salter, Australian Army, waiting to see him in the study," said Johnny Bull, and went dashing off after Squiff.

A minute later I heard Squiff running along the corridor, and I knew that the little rehearsal in the music-room was over for the time being. But even if I hadn't known then, I should have soon after; for Hoskins came swaggering in, and actually started telling me again about the extraordinary progress Field was making with his playing.

"That's more than I'm doing with my prep," I answered, "and I don't want to know anything more about Squiff and his music. It gets on my nerves, and so do you—so buzz off!"

Hoskins gave a snort of disgust, and "buzzed off."

Meanwhile, Squiff was all over this chap Captain Salter, who was his cousin, and I could hear him right down the passage telling him how glad he was to see him. Then things quieted down a bit, and I got on with my work.

But there was someone who wasn't working, and who might have been better employed if he had been; and that was Bunter, the prize fat ass of the Remove.

All he thinks about is gorging and listening at the other fellows' keyholes. And that was just what he was doing at that very moment—listening at a keyhole, I mean. And it was at Squiff's study, too, and a stranger in there! What would it have looked like for the school if Squiff's cousin, a captain in the Army, had suddenly opened that door and found Bunter crouching down there listening to what was going on? Pretty thick—eh?

However, that's by the way. The most important thing is that Bunter heard Squiff tell Captain Salter that he had got a splendid stunt coming off that night against a chap in the school who considered himself a musical genius. That was Hoskins, of course.

"He's been swanking to everybody about a clever system he's got of teaching people to play the piano in about three weeks," explained Squiff, "and we've all got absolutely fed up with it. So I thought of a wheeze for taking him down a peg, and I went to him and said I'd like to have some lessons."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the captain. "Why, you were a jolly decent player when I last heard you, and that's years ago."

"Well, I could play a bit, anyway," said Squiff, putting on a bit of modesty, "but Hoskins didn't know that, neither did any of the other fellows; so I'm going to play a duet with him at a concert to-night, and he's going to swank no end about how he's got me on—or, at least, he thinks he is."

"I'd rather like to come to that concert," laughed Captain Salter.

"Good egg! You shall, then!" grinned Squiff.

Of course, I didn't know anything about all this till some time afterwards, and, needless to say, I didn't know Bunter was listening at the door. If I had have done, I should have gone and booted him out of it, sharp!

Anyway, Bunter crawled away when he had heard what I've just told you, and he was chuckling and rubbing his fat hands like a sort of double-barrelled Mephistopheles.

Bunter went straight along and routed out Hoskins to tell him what he had found out. Bunter listens at keyholes out of curiosity, but he never loses a chance of profiting by what he hears.

Of course, most of us know his little dodges now, and whenever he comes along with some priceless bit of news we know he's short of cash or grub. When I tell you that he's always got hold of something fresh in the way of important information, it will give you some idea of his usual financial condition.

On this occasion he thought he was going to do well out of Hoskins with the conversation he had overheard, and he went rolling into Study No. 5 on the Shell passage, where the musical ass was alone, beaming with smiles.

Before he could get a word out, however, Hoskins, who, I suppose, like all geniuses, was worked up to a sort of nervous excitement by the approaching concert, was down on him like a thousand of bricks.

"Look here, you fat ass!" he exclaimed fiercely. "You can buzz off, quick, or I'll go for you! I'm up to my eyes in work on a new composition I'm going to play to-night as an encore, and I've got no time to listen to your potty talk!"

You see, the conceited bounder was sure of getting an encore.

"Oh, really, Hosky, old fellow——" began Bunter, in his usual style.

"Buzz off!" shouted Hoskins.

"Oh, very well!" snapped Bunter, nettled by Hoskins' reception of him. "I was going to tell you that Squiff's been pulling your leg over this musical business, but I sha'n't now. I've got the information from a special and reliable source."

Hoskins hesitated for about two seconds, but no longer. If any doubt flashed through his mind he dismissed it at once. He wasn't going to condescend to climb down to the porpoise after the way he'd received him.

"You're a rotten Bolshevik, that's what you are!" yelled Hoskins. "Trying to sow unrest and discord in a peaceful community!"

Bunter didn't seem to know what to say to that, and before he had time to think of anything he got a surprise.

Hoskins leaped up out of his chair, and rushed at him like a bulldog after a cat. Bunter turned round and ran for the door. He got to it all right, but he only managed to get half of himself through it in his hurry, for he tripped over the mat, and fell down with a crash. His head and body were outside the study, and his legs were still inside.

Hoskins soon settled that for him, though, by using the door as a means of pushing Bunter out. Then he turned the key and went back to the table.

Bunter picked himself up, hurt in mind and body. And, apart from all that, he was bitterly disappointed, because he had ex-

pected great things of Hoskins. Anyway, he dragged himself off to his study, and flopped down into a chair to recover from his painful ordeal, and think out some fresh wheeze.

About an hour later he waddled along the corridor in search of Squiff. He thought that if he could make him believe that he knew all about the coming stunt Squiff might pay him to keep quiet about it. It's only fair to Bunter to say that he had got a bit of a doubt as to whether it would work, but he decided to take the risk; and, apart from that, it was just on tea-time, and he thought there might be a chance of a feed at Squiff's expense.

As luck would have it, he found Squiff alone in his study, so he got to business at once.

"Good-afternoon, Squiff, old fellow!" he began affably.

"What do you want, tubby?" demanded Squiff gruffly, not trying to conceal his annoyance at Bunter's entrance.

"Well, old man," went on Bunter, not in the least put out, "I've got something rather important to say to you."

"Oh, yes," retorted Squiff; "you've got an idea that most of the things you say are important, but nobody else ever seems to share your opinion."

"Oh, really, you know," expostulated Bunter, "that's not the proper way to treat a gentleman who comes to you for a little confidential chat!"

"Brrrrr!" grunted Squiff. "Well, come on, then, buck up, or you'll find yourself outside on your neck in a minute!"

"Oh, really," protested Bunter again, "I shall feel constrained to——"

"For goodness' sake say what you've got to say, and clear out, or else don't say it at all!" yelled Squiff.

"Well—er," said Bunter, taking the bull by the horns, "it's—er—come to my knowledge, from a very trustworthy source, that—er—you've got a wheeze coming off to-night against Hoskins. My source of information is absolutely——"

"Your sauce is absolutely the outside limit!" shouted Squiff, jumping up from his chair so suddenly that Bunter made an involuntary backing movement towards the door.

"You've been listening at the keyhole, you fat toad!" roared Squiff.

"Oh, really, Squiff, that's too bad! You must know that my principles wouldn't allow me to do a thing like that?" said Bunter, in injured tones.

"Yes—I don't think!" retorted Squiff. "I know you would; and I know you have, you beastly porpoise!"

Then he paused, and a thoughtful expression gave place to the one of anger. He realised that if he let Bunter go away from his study the yarn would soon be all over Greyfriars, and so his little wheeze would be absolutely spoiled. Then an idea occurred to him.

"Well, what were you going to suggest?" he asked, in quite an amiable tone.

And Bunter looked a bit surprised.

"Well, Squiff, old fellow," he replied, "I thought, that p'r'aps, as I'm absolutely right out of grub, and my postal-order hasn't turned up, you might stand me a feed out of your cupboard, on the understanding that I—er—keep quiet about the bizney."

Putting it like that made Squiff awfully angry, you know, but he stifled his wrath, and smilingly turned to Bunter.

"Oh, yes, I see!" he replied. "Well, just come along with me, and I'll see what I can do for you. I've got a big trunk up in the top box-room."

As he said this he winked at Bunter in a way calculated to make the fat ass infer that the trunk was full of grub. Of course, it wasn't, and Squiff wasn't to blame if Bunter would allow himself to be easily tricked.

However, they ascended the stairs, and reached the box-room. Squiff opened the door, and allowed Bunter to pass in first.

"That's my trunk," he said, pointing to a big one in the corner.

Bunter fairly jumped towards it and lifted the lid. It was absolutely empty!

He turned round to express his indignation to Squiff, and was just in time to see the door shut. Then the key was turned in the lock. He was a prisoner!

"If you shout or kick the door," came the voice of Squiff through the keyhole, "you'll probably bring Quelch on the scene, and then—well, you know what would happen to you if he knew you'd been listening outside a study door!"

Leaving Bunter to think this over, he returned to his study, grinning like a Cheshire cat.

But that wasn't the end of Squiff's idea. He had been wondering how he was going to expose Hoskins at the concert that night; but he had now decided that Bunter was going to do it for him. If he could get someone to release the fat beast from the box-room at just about the time the concert was starting, he had worked it out that by the time Bunter got to the hall, for which he would make immediately, he and Hoskins would be about to render their duet, as they were fourth down on the programme.

Just then he heard Alonzo's voice in the passage. Of course, why hadn't he thought of it before? Alonzo was the very fellow for the job.

A moment later Alonzo was promising faithfully to do something very important for Squiff. Squiff knew, as everybody else does, that you can always trust Alonzo, so he handed to him the key of the box-room, and told him that he wanted him to go up there sharp at seven o'clock, and release a tame pig he had got locked up in there.

"He won't hurt you," explained Squiff; "he'll just run downstairs by himself, and out into the field. You see, I daren't let him out just now, because the Head or someone might see him, and then I should get in the very dickins of a row! But it'll be all quiet here at seven o'clock. If you come on to the concert immediately afterwards, you'll be in time to hear me and Hoskins play our duet, and there won't be anything worth hearing before that."

Alonzo, of course, is awfully green, and he took in the whole yarn; although, it's true, he did think it was a bit queer for a tame pig to be locked in the box-room. Anyway, he said, "Oh, certainly, my dear Field!" And Squiff knew it would be all right.

Well, Alonzo thought more about the business when he got away from Squiff's study, and more than once he was half-inclined to go back and tell Squiff that he had decided not to do it. Letting a pig loose struck Lonzy as risky.

But Alonzo, whatever else he may be, is a fellow of his word, and when he had thought a bit longer over it he came to the conclusion that he could hardly refuse to do what Squiff had asked, though the more he pondered upon it the less he liked the idea.

He liked it less when the fellows started off in groups for the concert, and he hunted round for Squiff, to ask him if he couldn't let the tame pig out earlier than seven; but Squiff had gone already, being one of the artistes, and Alonzo was far too much of a man of his word to take the thing into his own hands.

In consequence, he hung back. Some time before seven o'clock he put on his overcoat and cap, so that he should lose no time in getting to the concert after he had released the pig. Then he made his way to the top of the school.

As he approached the box-room he was startled by hearing the most extraordinary noises from that direction. There was a series of forceful thuds against the door, and then "Brrrr-rrr!" and "Ssssss!"

Then there was a succession of growls and murmurs that sounded as though the pig was holding a conversation with itself.

"Dear me!" muttered Alonzo to himself. "I don't believe it's really a tame pig at all! I do hope that Field has not organised this little plan with a view to bringing disaster upon me!"

He moved a few paces nearer to the door, and listened. Suddenly the noises in the box-room ceased. Alonzo shuffled his feet, and instantly there came a frantic tapping on the door.

"Really, it doesn't sound like a pig at all now!" murmured Alonzo. "That tapping is quite human!"

Poor old Alonzo began to tremble a little. He disliked the job before him more than ever now.

The tapping was followed by violent thumping, and Alonzo started. But he nearly jumped out of his skin a second later as a voice hissed through the keyhole.

"If there's anyone out there," it said, "for goodness' sake come and let me out! There's no air in here, and I'm dying of suffocation and hunger!"

"It's Bunter!" cried Alonzo, in amazement and relief.

The amazement was natural, and the relief was occasioned by the knowledge that he hadn't to release a wild pig.

But he had got something else to release that was pretty wild, I may say, and as he turned the key in the lock the door was flung open and Bunter, very like a wild pig, after all, dashed out upon him.

Alonzo staggered back a bit, but, recovering himself, he clutched at the Owl's coat as he was about to rush down the stairs.

"What ever has happened?" demanded Alonzo, in astonishment.

"Leave go, you silly ass!" exclaimed Bunter, in a voice that shook with anger. "I'm going to the concert!"

"Going to the concert!" repeated Alonzo, in surprise.

"Leave go, you ass!" bawled Bunter again, as Alonzo still grasped his coat, to prevent his escape without some explanation.

"Well, what——"

"It's that beastly rotter Squiff!" yelled the Owl. "I'm—I'm going to kill him!"

"Really, my dear Bunter, you must not allow such terrible designs to obsess your mind! It's——"

"Brrrr! Shut up, you maniac! And if you don't let go my coat I'll—I'll——"

Bunter gave an extra vicious tug, and released himself, and Alonzo stepped back a pace or two in alarm.

"I do believe his mind has become unhinged!" murmured Alonzo, as the Owl tore wildly towards the stairs.

"Bunter! My dear Bunter!" he called anxiously. "I'm going to the concert, too!"

"You can go to Jericho, for all I care!" shouted back Bunter, as he disappeared round the corner of the first flight of stairs.

"Dear me!" gasped Alonzo. "I am sure he's going to do damage to himself or someone else in his frenzy!"

And he ran downstairs and out into the Close, in the hope of overtaking the Owl; but the Owl was going as fast as his fat little legs would carry him to the concert hall.

Well, some time before the concert was due to start the hall was packed, and there were thirty or forty Greyfriars fellows—including me—in the back rows.

At last the bizney started with a pianoforte solo from Hoskins.

Next there was a song, and then a recitation; and then Hoskins and Squiff were announced to play their duet.

Now, I noticed that there seemed to be a lot of messing about in connection with this item, and that Squiff seemed to be delaying things as much as possible, arranging and rearranging the chairs. Finally, they appeared to be all ready to start, but just at that moment a terrific hullabaloo broke out at the door at the back of the hall, and Bunter came gasping in.

"He's a fraud, Hoskins! He's a fraud!" he yelled.

And everybody turned round in alarm.

"Throw him out!" shouted several members of the audience. And we at the back jumped out of our seats, and seized Bunter to carry out the command.

But he only yelled more and more, and then the chairman got up, and demanded silence and an explanation of the extraordinary disturbance.

Captain Salter, who had been sitting in the front row, got up, trying to bottle up his mirth, and he stepped up to the chairman. He talked to him for a minute or two, and all the time Bunter kept on howling.

Hoskins had retired behind the curtain, and left Squiff sitting on a chair at the piano by himself.

Then the chairman held up his hand for silence, and explained that there seemed to be some trickery on amongst the boys of the school, and that Master Field was really a very good pianist, and had not been taught in three weeks by Master Hoskins, though what difference that made he really couldn't see. Of course he couldn't! But we could, and we absolutely roared with laughter, and nearly raised the roof with cheering.

Anyway, Bunter was taken round to the back of the hall, and then Hoskins was sought after to get on with the duet. But he was missing, and he wasn't found until we got back to Greyfriars, so Squiff had to give a pianoforte solo instead; and jolly good it was, too! Why, he knocked old Hoskins into a cocked hat! The audience were delighted.

The concert went on all right after this, and was a great success, in spite of Hosky's absence—or because of it, I don't know which!

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THE ST. JIM'S GALLERY.

No. 27.—Mr. Henry Selby, M.A.

NOBODY loves Mr. Selby.

It would be remarkable—not to say miraculous—if anyone did.

A more cross-grained, unpleasant person it would be hard to find anywhere. Mr. Selby looks upon life with a jaundiced eye, and really resents seeing people enjoy themselves.

He takes care that the Third Form, over which he rules with despotic sway, should not enjoy itself in any way he can hinder. But the spirit of fagdom rises superior to the tyranny of Selby. Even in the Form-room itself the youngsters of the Third do get some fun at times.

There is only one individual at St. Jim's who can be compared for a moment with Mr. Henry Selby as an all-round tyrant and consistent wet-blanket.

That one is Mr. Horace Ratcliff, Housemaster of the New House.

Not for me be it to decide which is the blacker of the two! I have, I must own, rather more dislike for Mr. Selby, on the ground that his tyrannies are practised upon younger victims. But that is really only a matter of chance. If Ratty were Form-master of the Third, much as Selby does he would do. And the Third is not wholly or even largely composed of tender kiddies fresh from mamma's apron-strings, who are ready to pipe their eyes at a frown from authority. Not much! Wally D'Arcy and Frank Levison and Reggie Manners, Hobbs and Jameson and Frayne and Gibson—not one of these is at all that kind of infant. Piggott certainly is not. Piggy is really the only justification one can find for Selby. But it is doubtful whether Piggy gets it in the neck as often as he should. His Form-master dislikes all boys so much that he probably does not perceive the difference between Reuben Piggott and the average Third-Former.

The tale of Mr. Selby's tyrannies is so long a one that I almost hesitate to start upon it. But I cannot devote all my space to saying what he is, leaving untold what he has done. For when one has said that he is a wretched tyrant, one has said all that matters, unless one puts in a plea for mercy on the ground that he is a chronic sufferer from indigestion—he calls it dyspepsia, of course, but that is only another name for the same thing. Our great-grandfathers called it stomach-ache. It matters very little what you call it. A man with it, unless he has qualities which Mr. Selby certainly does not possess, is not fit to be a schoolmaster.

There is no fag in the Third who has not suffered at Mr. Selby's hands; but probably there is no other who has had to put up with quite as much as D'Arcy minor. Mr. Selby positively hates Wally, much as Mr. Ratcliff hates Figgy & Co.

But it cannot be denied that Mr. Selby has had to bear much at Wally's hands, too. D'Arcy minor is not at all the fellow to take things lying down. A little story recounted lately by Ernest Levison in these pages—"Aristides the Second"—showed pretty clearly the relations between the master on the one side and Wally and Frank Levison on the other. Mr. Selby's absolute unreasonableness came out very clearly in that. He had lost his glasses, and he took it for granted, on no evidence at all, that some member of the Form must have been responsible for the loss. None of them had had anything whatever to do with it; Mr. Selby's own carelessness was to blame. Wally was unjustly treated; but Wally's demeanour to his Form-master was, to say the least of it, lacking in respect. It is difficult to respect an arbitrary tyrant, however, and one cannot blame Wally much, though one can see that the more level-headed Frank Levison has a better notion of what is due to a master, be he ever so hateful.

There was a time when Mr. Selby's tyranny caused Wally to run away from school. That was earlier in their feud. Wally would not run away from "old Selby" now, whatever trouble there might be between them.

Quite accidentally he had kicked a football into Mr. Selby's face. It was not altogether wonderful that the master should not readily credit the complete accident theory. But Wally, mischievous young dog as he is, tells the truth; and a schoolmaster should have some judgment of character—enough, at least, to know the liar from the truth-teller. Wally said that it was an accident. That would have been good enough for Mr. Railton, however annoyed he might have been. But Mr. Selby persisted that it was a gross and intentional outrage; and he pushed the matter to such extremes that Wally saw nothing for it but to bolt, believing that he would certainly get the sack if he waited for it.

And there was another time when Arthur Augustus ran away, all through a trick played by Wally and some more of the fags upon Mr. Selby. A bucket of tar came into that. Mr. Selby was sitting quietly outside a summer-house in the Head's garden, reading, and the tar was emptied over his head.

Gussy had the misfortune to know of the scheme beforehand, and the further misfortune to be caught in the neighbourhood of the tragedy after it had happened. He refused to say who had done it, even when the Head commanded that he should do so. He was to be flogged. Wally had made up his mind to confess before that happened, but Wally's confession meant heavier trouble for him than Gussy's refusal to tell meant to Gussy. It could scarcely mean less than the sack.

Rather than be flogged Gussy bolted, and joined a circus. He was traced, and fetched back, of course. Meanwhile, Wally did what he could to put things straight by owning up. Mr. Selby pressed hard for the fag's expulsion, and was so enraged by the more merciful views of Dr. Holmes that he was positively rude to the Head.

Mr. Selby dislikes Gussy almost as much as he does Wally. When Arthur Augustus desires to argue the question of Wally's supposed delinquencies, he approaches Mr. Selby rather as if they stood on an equal footing. But the Third Form master does not care to talk to Gussy as "one gentleman to anothah."

There was another occasion when Wally came near getting the sack. Mr. Selby had tried him beyond all endurance. He had accused the fag of things he had not been guilty of. He had called him a liar; he had caned him again and again. It was not Wally who had put treacle in his Form-master's slippers. The Terrible Three had played that trick—rather a childish one for fellows of their standing, but Mr. Selby had been too much for their endurance, too.

Wally, quite desperate, lassoed Mr. Selby in the dusky quad, and got him, with his arms bound to his sides, in such a position that he could wind a rope round him and fasten him to one of the old elms.

Tom Merry and the rest knew how desperate Wally was, and Tom and Gussy, finding that he was out in the quad, went to look for him. They were too late to prevent the outrage. They met Wally as he came in, but he dodged them. Blake and Herries and Digby, going across to the New House, found Mr. Selby. He had fainted.

It really was a particularly black deed for a junior. For once Wally, scarcely himself through long brooding over the treatment he had had from Mr. Selby, failed to play the game. Accused of the outrage, he denied it point-blank.

Tom Merry saw him in the dormitory afterwards, and Wally confessed what he had done. He was very bitter and only half repentant. The iron had eaten into his soul. He felt that it was really Selby's fault he had lied, and yet he was ashamed of that lie as he was ashamed of nothing else in the whole miserable business.

As so often happens, one lie led to more. Tom Merry lied to the Head to save Wally. Manners and Lowther lied to back up their chum. Gussy lied for love of his brother. They put it straight in the long run, for they confessed to the Head. The whole story came out, and to Dr. Holmes it seemed that Mr. Selby was at least as much to blame as anyone else in the affair. "Mr. Selby had a very uncomfortable quarter of an hour with the Head. Dr. Holmes spoke with such exceeding plainness that when the Third Form master left the study he was quite pale, and there were beads of perspiration on his brow." And for a time he went easier with Wally, only caning him for what he did, not for everything for which no other scapegoat could readily be found. But that state of affairs was not of long continuance.

It was Wally who enabled Manners to get quite a striking snapshot of Mr. Selby. Wally used a peashooter, Manners—naturally—a camera. But Mr. Selby twigged Manners, though he did not twig Wally; and he demanded the giving up, not only of the offending film, but of the camera. Manners could not understand it. He felt as if he were letting Mr. Selby off lightly, for one of the schemes he had proposed to his chums was to set Towser on the Third Form master, and snap the result. A peashooter was very mild compared with Towser—as Mr. Selby would imagine Towser. But there was nothing mild about Mr. Selby. He dragged Mr. Railton into the trouble; and though the School House master would not go the lengths he wanted, he did cane Manners, and threaten confiscation of the camera if there was any repetition of the offence.

I can only remember one occasion upon which Mr. Selby showed up in even a comparatively amiable light. That was when, having been guilty of a gross mistake, and having had to own it—and it takes a great deal to make him admit himself wrong—he presented a silver cup as a prize in a race, which Blake won. On that occasion the juniors gave Mr. Selby musical honours. But one fears that even while they were singing their conviction that Mr. Selby was "a jolly good fellow" was but a feeble one.

It was a very bad mistake indeed that he had made. He had accused Blake & Co. of tampering with exam papers in his room. They had been there, it is true; they had seen the sheets of foolscap on the table, and had guessed what they were; and they had shut the door because Blake had been seized with the notion that some fellows in the Fourth would not be above taking a look at those papers if they saw a chance. When the question came to be thrashed out Dr. Holmes got a report from Mr.

Lathom about the four. With the exception of D'Arcy, he said, they had all been in trouble quite as often as most fellows in their Form. But that trouble had never been of the sort that justified any suspicion of their honour. Such an argument would go a long way with Dr. Holmes; it would go a long way with any reasonable man. For, if one is not to judge a fellow on his past record, where in the nature of the case no direct evidence for him is available, on what can one judge him? The four all denied the crime imputed to them. There was no possibility of proving that they had committed it. All that could be said was that they had put themselves—quite accidentally—in a position in which they might have committed it had they chosen to do so.

So that the crux of the whole affair was: Were they the kind of fellows to do such a thing? The Head held not. Mr. Selby held that they were. To him any boy was that kind of fellow. Honourable boys were only boys who had never been caught out—to Mr. Selby.

Well, he had made what amends he could, and for once was called "a jolly good fellow." Let that count to him for as much as it is worth—a little more, if you like—and it will not weigh much against the daily injustices and tyrannies of which he has been guilty.

Mr. Selby did not show up well in the matter of Joe Frayne. He showed up particularly badly in the matter of the Army and its demands upon the manhood of the nation. Mr. Selby was one of those who had no doubt whatever that every fit man under forty-one ought to go—he himself being over that age. He had made himself particularly unpleasant to the Terrible Three, and they played a jape on him. With the help of Blake's hand printing-press they wangled into the "Stop Press" column of a copy of the "Evening News" an intimation that the military age was about to be raised to fifty-one—which was prophetic, after all. And they took care that Mr. Selby saw that copy and no other. It nearly sent him into a fit.

But he had a worse time later, when Mr. Curll, in the guise of a big pot from the Recruiting Office, came to St. Jim's—bribed thereto by his dear young friends, of course—and actually walked Mr. Selby off to explain his failure to produce his papers, which Lowther had hidden in a book in the master's own study. The joke was stopped before it had gone too far—well, let us say before it had gone as far as it might have been pushed—and Mr. Selby never knew the truth.

Other things crowd into one's mind—the St. Jim's ruins, and the rivalry of Selby and Ratty as archæologists, Cardew's special edition of "Tom Merry's Weekly"—or, rather, Racke and Crooke's fake from it—and Messrs. Selby and Ratcliff fuming together over the insults to their dignity contained in it; but it is time to stop.

The Editor's Chat.

For Next Wednesday:

"THE CHUMS OF NUMBER FIVE."

By Martin Clifford.

Eric Kerruish, Richard Julian, Patrick Reilly, and Harry Hammond—those four are the chums of Study No. 5.

We have had stories about Julian and about Hammond. I cannot recall one specially about either Reilly or Kerruish. And quite certainly we have never had one before with the four as its central characters.

Yet they are quite interesting enough to justify one—and more to follow, maybe. And there is sufficient variety among them, too. Irish, Manx, Jewish, Cockney—a queer mixture, but a good one.

Julian is the real head of the Co., but I have put Kerruish first above because he happens to be the most prominent in this particular story. It is he who gets into trouble, and finds his chums loyal when nearly everyone else is down upon him.

In that respect the story bears some resemblance to this week's yarn, with Dick Redfern under a cloud, and Owen and Lawrence standing by him. But in other respects it is widely different. And the similarity in that one thing is of no consequence. For no boy who is a boy, no man who still has something of the heart of a boy in him and cares for school stories, and quite certainly no girl, ever tires of that theme—the golden chain of loyalty that binds true chums.

"FALKIRK" AGAIN!

"Falkirk," to whom I replied a few weeks ago, has written to me again—a letter of some twelve or fifteen hundred words, very indignant, and not very reasonable.

I will quote from his letter, and comment afterwards:

"I was very much surprised to see your answer, as I had given up all hope of ever seeing it. The only reason for the delay that I can form is that the letter came from a Scotsman, and a Scotsman, in an Englishman's estimation, does not count; hence it was beneath your dignity to answer me—in a hurry, anyway. How you ultimately came to do so I cannot conceive. Perhaps you will enlighten me when you answer this epistle—if you consent to do so. Had the letter come from one of your fellow-Englishmen, or one of your dearly-beloved Americans, it would have been answered in the very next issue; but because it came from an 'insignificant pup' of a Scot, it was pitched aside with a 'That can wait!' growl after it.

"It appears that the letter 'amused you highly.' Well, perhaps it did. But I don't believe so. You merely said it did to show your readers how clever you are.

"The attribution of red hair and freckles to Kerr is merely a hit at Scotland, for everybody knows that a person with a mop of red hair is not a beauty.

"The only place where Americans can do anything gallant is on the films.

"I am enclosing a poem with this letter that I, along with all Scotland, consider the best and finest ever written. I do hope you will publish it. Leave out some of the piffle you put in, and there will be ample room.

"The poem is about the gallant seven Scotsmen who held out at Mœuvres . . . Many Englishmen—perhaps even yourself—never heard of this magnificent display of Scottish courage. Did you hear?

"I honestly hope that you will not injure yourself in any way should this letter prove as amusing to you as my last . . . Read it slowly in order to avoid a fit. It's highly amusing, I know."

Is it highly amusing? Really, I don't find it so. It is spiteful, it is in rank bad taste, and it contains several statements which are absolutely untrue, as well as a number of inferences which are absolutely unfounded.

I have not a word to say against Scotland. I have never said a word against Scotland. No one honours the bravery of her sons, the fine, sterling qualities of the Scottish nation, more than I do. Of all the great men dead I think Sir Walter Scott is the one I care for most of all; and it is tolerably certain I know more of the literature and history of Scotland than my correspondent.

It was quite true that I had forgotten his letter. It is also true that, so far from rushing to answer letters am I, that I do not answer in the paper one-tenth of those which press for an answer. He quotes "insignificant pup," as though I had called him that. I did not. He has labelled himself, if the label is to go on. He says that he disbelieves what I say. That is not the usual way of conducting an argument among people with manners. He sneers at red hair. I don't. There are certain kinds of red hair that seem to me more beautiful than hair of any other kind. The great poem he sends is not a poem at all in any true sense of the word—it is mere verse, a bit better than doggerel, but sadly lacking in finish. To say that England had no appreciation of the Seven Men of Mœuvres is to say what is untrue. But he does not say it—he implies it, which is rather worse. He does, however, make a definite statement about Americans which is grossly and flagrantly untrue, and in the worst of spirits. And he finishes with a fling of impudence.

I really do not think that he is a specimen Scot.

I will try to find room for the verses next week, but I have not room this. I might say it is through printing too much piffle!

NOTICES.

Correspondence, etc., Wanted by—

Cyril Graves, care of Corn Exchange, Leeds, with readers in Holland, Switzerland, and Italy—11-16.

E. de Sousa, 41, Granville Road, Knowloon, via Hong Kong, with readers anywhere.

Alec A. Prescott, Chatham House, Underdown Road, Herne Bay, Kent, with readers—16-17—interested in coal-gas and its manufacture.

D. H. Dean, 62, Falmouth Road, Bishopston, Bristol, wants members for Correspondence Club. Stamped, addressed envelope.

Back Numbers Wanted by—

Miss Geta Gay, Tower Lodge, 4, Orchard Road, Stevenage, Herts.—GEMS 472-6, inclusive; also 486-7-8, 490, 494-504 inclusive; also, 519 and 525. 3s. offered, or 2d. each. Write first.

R. Brittain, 50, Eastern Road, Wylde Green, Birmingham.—"Magnets"—334-7, 351-2-3, 358; also any Christmas Double Numbers before 1917.

J. Fisher, 3, Bawhirley Road, Greenock, Scotland.—"Sexton Blake Library," 33, "The House with the Double Moat." Good condition. 6d. offered.

Donald McKenzie, 159, Smith Street, Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada.—GEMS 380-83, 409, 445, 446, 447, 451, 458, 476.

Harry Savage, 3, Worcester Road, Evesham, Worcester.—"Magnets" 377, 376, 366, 358, 83, 305, 392, 370, 353, 190, 254, 395. Write first.

Your Editor

THE GREAT NEWS.

By TOM MERRY.

IT was Saturday, November the 9th, and the Common-room was crowded. The air was full of suppressed excitement, and everyone eagerly waited for the great news that was expected to come through.

"Bai Jove! It's weally most exciting, deah boys!"

"Umph!"

Apparently nobody seemed in a chatty mood.

There was a nice, bright fire in the Common-room, and we had drawn up all the chairs and couches into a huge semicircle in front of the fire. Every chair in the room was occupied, and some fellows were standing.

Suddenly there came an interruption. Monty Lowther rushed in.

His face was aglow with excitement, and as he entered a general yell went up.

"What's up?"

"What's the news?"

"Cough it up!"

"Heard the latest news?" panted Monty.

Everyone sprang to their feet.

"Bai Jove, you seem vewy excited, Lowthah. His somethin' bigger than we expected happened? Has the price of toppahs gone down?"

"Or the price of tarts?" asked Baggy Trimble.

"Blow toppers! Blow tarts! What I want to know is, have you heard the latest news?"

"No!"

"Get on with it, chump!"

"We haven't heard!"

"Neither have I," said Lowther blandly.

"What?"

Lowther plumped down in the chair Blake had just vacated in his excitement.

For a second there was dead silence, broken only by the ticking of the clock and the heavy breathing of angry, disappointed juniors.

Then came a terrible yell.

"Bump him!"

"Scrap him!"

"Ow! Yow!"

It was some minutes before quiet was restored, and then Monty Lowther picked himself up very gingerly in the passage, a sadder but wiser humorist.